Modernizing a Marginal Maritime Metropolis:

The Emergence of Canada's Postwar Planning Practice in Saint John, New Brunswick

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the 1946 *Master Plan for the City and County of Saint John*, a municipal plan produced between 1944 and its adoption in 1945 by the architect-planner John Campbell Merrett for the City of Saint John, New Brunswick. I examine this document as both a locally and nationally significant development in Canadian architectural and planning histories. Reviewing the many agencies, commissions, and individuals who influenced the development of the 1946 plan, this thesis proposes a broad interpretation of authorship. This thesis seeks two primary outcomes: first, to intervene in a local discourse that misrepresents the legacy of the plan to the detriment of the region's architectural scholarship. Second, this thesis seeks to engage the 1946 plan in a national discourse that has yet to address the significant contribution of the city of Saint John to Canadian planning in the critical post-Second World War period of Canadian architectural production. This thesis argues that Merrett's plan both anticipated and mitigated significant economic setbacks and greatly assisted the struggle of the city of Saint John in maintaining its status as a cultural and economic metropolis during the period. The 1946 plan raises foundational questions of Canadian federalism and its influence on the postwar built environment and highlights the continued national influence of Canada's easternmost regions.

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My colleagues at the City of Saint John assisted greatly in the production of this thesis. Special thanks are due to Richard Evans and Patricia Anglin for generous access to City records. Robert (Bob) Boyce, as a friend and mentor and as the keeper-of-records for Mott, Myles, and Chatwin Architects, deserves my deepest thanks. Emma Sampson has witnessed the entirety of my MA candidacy; for her adaptive, sympathetic, and unfailing support, I am incredibly grateful.

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*‘O fortunati, quorum iam moenia surgunt!’**
Aeneas ait, et fastigia suspicit urbis.
Infert se saeptus nebula, mirabile dictu,
Per medios, miscetque viris, neque cernitur ulli.
Virgil, Aeneid I: 430-440

‘Oh, how blessed are people whose ramparts are already rising!’
So Aeneas observes, looking up at the roofs of the city,
Fenced, as he walks, by a fortress of cloud (it’s a marvellous story)
Moving along their midst unseen, yet mingling with people.
(trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007)

*Motto of the Corporation of the City of Saint John.

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List of Abbreviations

CPAC – Community Planning Association of Canada

JRAIC – Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada

CMHC – Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation*

TPC – Town Planning Consultants Limited

CIP – Canadian Institute of Planners

CBD – Central Business District

CN – Canadian National Railway

NFB – National Film Board of Canada

*After 1979, the organization is known as the ‘Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Introduction

In recent years, Canadian architectural scholarship has endeavoured to develop its understanding of the postwar period. Rhodri Windsor Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino's *Canada: Modern Architectures in History*, particularly, has demonstrated postwar architectural production in Canada is distinct and not derived solely from European and American practices of the same period.[1] Within this new body of Canadian architectural scholarship, researchers have struggled to extend their scope beyond the commissioned works of architects to account for the increasingly complex networks of professionals that influenced postwar design and building practices. Simultaneously, case studies to date have focused on relatively few regions and urban centres that experience significant and explosive growth during the period: Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver to name several examples. This dearth of diversity excludes regions and urban centres that do not experience these paradigms in the same way—though themselves weathering tremendous pressure to adapt their built environment to new ways of living. The case study of Saint John, New Brunswick introduces this other facet of postwar architectural practice in Canada. A case study of urban planning, as done by an architect, demonstrates Saint John's contribution to the transformation of both architectural and planning professions during the period. Commanding tremendous public resources, this hybrid practitioner produced a variety of proposals, ranging from highways and monumental bridges to schools, parks, public housing, and centres of employment. Though these proposals also included the destruction of

[1] Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino, *Canada: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016).

neighbourhoods, they provided a roadmap for the city's adaptation to rapidly-changing postwar life.

The appointment of John Campbell Merrett (1909-1998), a McGill-trained, Montreal-based architect, as Director of the Saint John Planning Commission in April of 1944 demonstrates the alliance of architectural and planning practices in the postwar. By the time of his departure in November of 1945, Merrett's Commission had created the monumental 1946 *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John.* Not only did this document dramatically accelerate the course of postwar development in the city and in the region, it also furnished opportunities to lift the city out of decades of decline—experienced broadly across economic and population growth, as well as status as a major centre in the region and in the country.[2] I will demonstrate that the 1946 *Master Plan for the City and County of Saint John* is a document of national significance. This plan reflects, through its content, the circumstances of its creation, and the heritage in which it firmly rests that Saint John was the pre-eminent centre of planning practice in the Maritimes and possibly, in Canada, during the early postwar era. The glaring inadequacy of the federal government's postwar housing programs, as delivered through the *National Housing Act,* did not suit the established and slow growing centres of the Maritimes. It is only through the decisive action proposed in the 1946 *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John* that the city's prospects for postwar development and growth are secured against utter ruin. These conclusions reinforce the conclusions of numerous New Brunswick-based scholars. The Maritime Provinces are drained of capital throughout various periods in the history of Canada. Leaders and governments relied on programs designed to suit the development pattern

[2] For more information on these local trends and their manifestation outside of the region, see Don Nerbas, *Dominion of Capital: The Politics of Big Business and the Crisis of the Canadian Bourgeoisie, 1914-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

of other regions as they lacked the necessary capital to construct their own solutions. The result has had tremendous influence, manifest not only in the region's collective memory, but also in its built environments. This difficult legacy can only be unpacked through the re-consideration of the 1946 plan in a wider context.

As such, I am writing for an audience of peers and colleagues in my home city of Saint John. I intended to build upon the existing literature, both scholarly (as in the case of Greg Marquis' article "Uneven Renaissance: Urban Development in Saint John: 1955-1976,") and popular (as in the case of Brenda Peters McDermott's *Urban Renewal Saint John: A City Transformed*) through an architectural-historical analysis of the plan.[3] My analysis is both a product of my study and of my experience as a resident and as a working professional. Though, as Andrew Leach remarks, "there are few if any limits placed upon the forms of evidence employed by historians of architecture," I rely heavily on government publications contained in local archives.[4] My analysis scrutinizes the subtle differences between technical documents and a range of drawn proposals to better understand the 1946 plan. Rather than considering Merrett as the plan's sole author, this thesis identifies a segment of the complex network of actors that shaped the plan. This analysis helps to explain the most striking of the city's mid-century transformations, only begun in the decades following Merrett's departure. As such, this thesis is a work of discourse analysis, grounded in Merrett's influence. This legacy of proposals and projects, rather than any one commission (as might usually make up an architectural-historical analysis), constitute the bulk of the city's architectural production in the early postwar period. While many of these proposals were not realized in their 1946 forms, the construction of the

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3 See Brenda Peters-McDermott, *Urban Renewal Saint John: A City Transformed* (Saint John: Private Printing, 2008).

4 See Andrew Leach, *What is Architectural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 77.

Saint John Harbour Bridge (the largest infrastructure project in the city in the twentieth century) points to precisely the impact of the 1946 plan in setting priorities that guided this rapid transformation.

The formative influence of Merrett's plan in conceptualizing the Harbour Bridge and other major projects is crucial to understanding the impact of emergent federal policies at the beginning of the urban renewal era. Saint John's period of urban renewal began a decade following Merrett's departure, around 1956. This style of urban development was popular in North America from the end of the Second World War to the early 1980s. I argue the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), underwrote all of Saint John's urban renewal programs. Federally subsidized expropriation and demolition of so-called slums allowed for the construction of modern expressways, shopping malls, and new industrial uses. The period has attracted a range of critics, notably Jane Jacobs, whose *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* remains a staple of planning, architectural, and urban history discourses. Writing in 1961, Jacobs declared: "The economic rationale of current city rebuilding does not rest soundly on reasoned investment of public tax subsidies, as urban renewal theory proclaims, but also on vast, involuntary subsidies wrung out of helpless site victims."[5] In the context of so-called urban renewal in Saint John, Greg Marquis has argued that the period, "on almost every measure … helped worsen many of the community's underlying structural problems."[6] As Don Nerbas has further argued, civic leaders coveted Central Canadian capital and would make decisions prioritizing its acquisition (such as, I argue, the city's heavily-subsidized postwar development

5 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961). 5.

6 Greg Marquis, "Uneven Renaissance: Urban Development in Saint John, 1955-1976," *Journal of New Brunswick Studies* 1, (2010): 91-112.

pattern), a choice that worked against the community's best interest.[7] The urban renewal era appears to have affected Saint John most dramatically, both in the context of New Brunswick and, in my opinion, of Atlantic Canada more broadly. It aims to reconcile the broad criticisms of this later period with Merrett's transformational postwar proposals. Though the urban renewal era's development patterns were repeated across other major Canadian cities, I believe that the example of Saint John demonstrates considerable buy-in at the local level. I believe remorse only emerged in the decades following the loss of large-scale federal investment in the city's built environment. I argue a long history of planning practice in Saint John cultivated considerable support for urban renewal projects. The 1946 plan provided a compelling and ideologically defensible foundation for support of urban renewal in Saint John— though the plan itself could not possibly have anticipated the scale and the catastrophic failures of more ambitious urban renewal proposals.

Merrett's 1946 *Master Plan for the City and County of Saint John* is an important interpretive tool for examining this period of Canadian architectural production. Simultaneously, the text interfaces with a variety of historical paradigms produced in other scholarly literatures on the Maritimes. A distinct lack of art and architectural scholarship on the region—and particularly on developments from this period—has led me to specific methodological approaches in order to research and argue this thesis. I rely heavily on archival material as a means of expanding the existing secondary literature. Particularly as concerns the text of the 1946 plan and its various summaries, I use literary analysis to consider the precise meaning of the text. While the discourse was not one exclusively composed of written or otherwise literary

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[7] Don Nerbas, "Adapting to Decline: The Changing Business World of the Bourgeoisie in Saint John, NB, in the 1920s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (June 2008): 185.

works, images and plans lend additional primary source material to my analysis. My conclusion attributes the monumental impact of the 1946 plan to a variety of individuals and agencies, instead of a singular architect. I aim to distance the 1946 plan and later urban renewal studies. I believe that urban renewal studies, which emerged in Saint John after 1956, presented similar but radically transformed iterations of the 1946 plan's proposals. While from relatively few repositories, the documents I have accessed, analyzed and partially reproduced in this thesis have been largely absent from the literature. As I introduce new material into the literature, I aim to broaden the literary value of Saint John's rich postwar production of planning.[8] The extant literature more closely follows popular, political, and economic histories of the city and the region. A variety of texts in a range of disciplines by Marquis, Nerbas, Peters-McDermott, and Donald Savoie demonstrate more abundant historical approaches, than the art and architectural histories of Karen Herring, John Leroux, and Kirk Niergarth. Savoie and Nerbas are fixtures in contemporary studies of the Maritimes and Southern New Brunswick, in particular.[9] Archival sources, such as minute books, newspapers, publications of the popular press, and trade literature inform their works. They are concerned with the politics of capital and the influence of the Canadian federal system on the economic, social, and cultural function of the Maritimes. Decidedly, they are critical of the wholesale neglect of the region by Ottawa-based policymakers across a variety of historical case studies. Simultaneously, they push back against the labels of 'regional scholarship,' opting to frame their critiques of Canadian federalism among similar studies produced in Western Canada. If their observations were circulated widely in the region's

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8 Terry Eagleton argues a broad definition of literature for the purposes of neo-Marxist literary analysis. He suggests literary value is created by interest. See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1983): 7-12.

9 See Nerbas, "Adapting to Decline," and Donald Savoie, *Looking for Bootstraps: Economic Development in the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus, 2017).

popular discourse, I believe these texts would dramatically alter local discourse in Saint John and across the Maritime Provinces.

This thesis emphasizes urban design as a foundational challenge that guided much of the period's development. Proposals were shaped by the interaction between rocky and hilly terrain, community planning rhetoric, and federal infrastructure funding schemes. The product is an urban environment unique to Saint John. The postwar transformation of the built environment was designed and executed by robust City agencies and public committees. This thesis makes use of numerous archival documents contained in the collection of the City of Saint John to demonstrate the agency of these local actors. Scholarly work has not yet examined these documents. They suggest that the 1946 *Master Plan* was only one facet of a much larger civic apparatus that sought to secure a safer and more prosperous future for the city. This thesis strongly emphasizes the contribution of Merrett's 1946 plan to the development of professional planning practices in Canada. While Central and Western Canadian histories of planning are addressed in Windsor-Liscombe and Sabatino's, *Canada: Modern Architectures in History*, few words are set aside for the Maritimes and this region's clear command of the nation's discourse in the period. This thesis further argues that the federal government programs administered through the *National Housing Act* and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reward the City's efforts with ample, though ill-thought out funding opportunities. I argue these programs suited another context and did not adequately address Saint John's difficult topography and existing density. Ultimately, influx of capital would usher in the so-called urban renewal era. The result of these failures, as explored in other disciplines, is the same fractured landscape that Marquis, Savoie, Nerbas, Leroux, and Peters-McDermott all address, in turn.

The development of professional planning practices in Canada, generally, has received limited scholarly attention, as compared to those of architecture and landscape architecture. The overlapping visions of planning and architecture practices in Canada during the postwar years remains obscure. This is the principal benefit of a case study of the 1946 plan to a national architectural-historical scholarship. Planning in this period is increasingly a subject of public interest and government patronage. Newfound political will made the expansion of Canada's fastest growing communities a matter of grave national concern in the closing years of the Second World War.[10] Merrett's background, particularly his training in architecture and planning, as well as his refined adaptation of modernist architectural rhetoric to Canadian contexts, bridges the seemingly disparate milieus of burgeoning cities in Central and Western Canada and the stagnant and seemingly derelict city of Saint John. While Saint John benefitted from Merrett's energy and his expertise, Merrett benefitted from longstanding and sophisticated planning practices in the city when he arrived. This exchange of ideas already unmakes a conventional assumption in architectural history: the directional flow of knowledge from Central Canadian metropole to regional fringe.

The extent of scholarly literature that engages with Merrett's 1946 plan consists of two texts, each published by the New Brunswick-based architect, curator, and architectural historian, John Leroux. First featured in *Building New Brunswick* and then examined in more detail in his 2018 exhibition catalogue *The Lost City*, Leroux's analysis makes several foundational criticisms of Merrett's plan, choosing to focus on its most inflammatory remarks. Published in 2008, *Building New Brunswick* is an ambitious and richly illustrated survey of architectures in what is known as New Brunswick from pre-contact Indigenous building practices to the present day. The

[10] Windsor-Liscombe and Sabatino, *Canada*, 111-112.

text discusses numerous other developments of the early postwar era and is understandably brief on Merrett's plan. Leroux frames Merrett's plan among a provincial school building campaign that, much as federal agencies quickly erected "efficient and well-built dwellings," subsidized "the largest school-building program New Brunswick had ever seen."[11] Leroux evokes the ambition and the energy of the period to express the rapid change in the province's architectural landscape. On the 1946 plan, Leroux notes, "the bottom line was that change would surely proceed full steam ahead—and more than a hundred and sixty years of built history would not get in the way."[12] Here, he is responding to a shortened reprint of Merrett's most memorable remark, from the opening pages of his plan:

> The fact remains, however, that Saint John has few, if any, points of true architectural or aesthetic merit, and it cannot be denied that the prevailing character is one of drabness and a lack of civic pride. A slum remains a slum, and a civic eyesore is still to be condemned, even though they be the sites of important events in the city's history. The younger generation of Saint John citizens is fully conscious of the nature of its surroundings, and its natural desire for beauty is not submerged by false sentiment nor by apathy. It is for this generation that the city must plan; and no excuse is necessary if the plan proposals seek to solve a pressing physical problem, or to create new civic beauty at the expense of some sentimental association with tradition.[13]

Leroux goes on to affirm the vibrancy of the city during the period and states: "the report laid the groundwork for imminent sweeping transformations, including the destruction of significant residential areas of unique character and the razing of viable neighbourhoods."[14] While this remark is briefly elaborated in Leroux's later work, urban renewal begins well after Merrett's departure. Where Leroux proposes the 1946 plan "laid the groundwork" for urban renewal, I argue the 1946 plan legitimized transformational planning and *enabled* the later (and distinct)

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11 John Leroux, *Building New Brunswick* (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2008), 174.
12 Ibid. 178.
13 John Campbell Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John* (Saint John: Barnes-Hopkins Limited, 1947), 7.
14 Leroux, *Building New Brunswick*, 178.

iterations of the so-called urban renewal era. Distancing the 1946 plan from later urban renewal plans legitimizes Merrett's sophisticated critiques of federal housing policy and his support for the City's creation of public housing on its own accord (the first such development in Canada).

The Canadian Institute of Planners recognized the 1946 plan's profound impact on the heritage of planning in Canada in 2014.[15] Clearly an exceptional rift exists between popular and professional interpretations of the plan. Put simply, only through the re-interpretation of the 1946 plan in a broader context will these disparate legacies be reconciled. It is wholly inadequate and, indeed, a disservice to the cultural history of the province and of the city to dispense of the plan as the simple precursor to urban renewal. Simultaneously, a relative lack of literature on the plan and on urban renewal disadvantages local people—who may not seek out their own interpretation of the 1946 plan in unpublished archival material. Leroux's *The Lost City*, published ten years after *Building New Brunswick*, provides contextual reference to categorize these transformative developments, looming large over the legacy of Merrett's plan. Leroux draws parallels to similar programs in large North American cities like New York and Toronto.[16] Unlike these cities, he argues, Saint John simply had not the same public backlash as was led by urban activists like Jane Jacobs and others.[17] His recent and prominent interpretation of the 1946 plan has been widely reproduced by the local bureau of the CBC.[18]

Leroux's analysis echoes much of the popular history that has been written about the period.[19] Leroux's images, often redistributed on social media, recall the painful memories of

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15 See Canadian Institute of Planners, Vision in Planning Award.

16 John Leroux, *The Lost City: Ian MacEachern's Photographs of Saint John* (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2018), 18-21.

17 Ibid. 18.

18 See Julia Wright, "Portraits of a Lost City: Saint John Before Urban Renewal," 24 February 2018, https://cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/portraits-of-a-lost-city-saint-john-before-urban-renewal-1.4544737.

19 See Peters-McDermott, *Urban Renewal Saint John.*

local people. Social media sources—while not a total view of public discourse—offer a glimpse of popular sentiment. Content creators regularly 'scrape' and repost fragments of municipal and provincial archives. Several of these content creators supplement these images with personal anecdotes and private photographic collections.[20] These posts constitute a valuable exercises in collective memory. There exists an opportunity for the region's institutions and scholars to engage with significant public interest in urban renewal and in mid-century architectural production. My re-interpretation of the 1946 plan distances the so-called urban renewal era from a much richer, equitable, and more hopeful postwar moment. Throughout the various documents surrounding the 1946 plan, the priorities of planners, politicians, and citizens are consistent with those of any other era: improved housing, modern transportation infrastructure, and a fighting chance for a failing economy. I propose a more complete interpretation: one in which stakeholders struggle against national political pressures and offer the most rational solutions to significant problems. In my opinion—where many of these problems persist seventy five years later—the 1946 *Master Plan of the Municipality of the City and County of Saint John* remains as relevant to local and non-local people as it did in June of 1945 when it was adopted.

John Campbell Merrett, a Brief Biography

John Campbell Merrett, a graduate of the McGill University School of Architecture and the Architectural Association at the University of London, brought a great deal of knowledge to the City when he was appointed as the director of its Town Planning Commission in the spring of 1944.[21] His years at McGill were marked by the influences of professors Ramsay Traquair

[20] See "The Lost Valley" Blog. http://thelostvalley.blogspot.com.
[21] John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, "JCM and Family by JCM," Book 13, page 64.

(1874-1952, who also served on campus as the cadet corps' bayonet instructor) and Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964).[22] Merrett graduated in a class of six in 1931 that also included Max Kalman (1906-2009), father of the architectural historian Harold Kalman (born 1943).[23] Equipped with a scholarship from the Province of Quebec worth $1,200 and renewable for two subsequent years, he embarked on a European tour between the summers of 1931 and of 1934. While on tour he met various European architects including Ragner Östberg (1866-1945) in Stockholm (Sweden), Erich Mendelsohn (1887-1953) in Berlin (Germany), and Willem Marinus Dudok (1884-1974) in Hilversum (Holland).[24] In October of 1933, he registered in a two term town planning course at the University of London during which time he also worked in the office of Maurice Webb (1880-1939), an architect and the son of the notable Victorian architect, Sir Aston Webb (1849-1930).[25] He also spent a considerable amount of time in the library of the Royal Institute of British Architects, identifying it as the place in which he "learned much about European architecture not learned at McGill."[26] Upon Merrett's return to Montreal from Europe in late summer 1934, he worked briefly in two architecture practices before he joined the architect's office at the Canadian National Railway (CN).[27] During this time, he contributed substantially to the design of the main concourse of Montreal's Central Station.[28] When his boss at CN, John Schofield (1883-1971) was appointed Comptroller of Construction at the

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Collection of the McGill University School of Architecture, Montreal. See also an interview produced by the McGill University School of Architecture on the occasion of its centenary. John Campbell Merrett, interviewed by Harry Mayerovitch January 6, 1996. Collection of the McGill University School of architecture: https://mcgill.ca/architecture/alumni/aluminterviews/merrett.

22 Ibid. 37.

23 Ibid. 45.

24 Ibid. 44-55.

25 Ibid. 53

26 Ibid. 46.

27 Merrett works briefly for Featherstonhaugh & Durnford and for Ross & MacDonald, though intermittently between 1934 and 1936. See John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, 59, 66.

28 "Merrett, John Campbell," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, accessed May 3, 2020, http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2252.

Department of Munitions and Supply, Merrett was hired as a ministerial aide and returned to Ottawa, where he previously graduated from Ashbury College in 1926.[29] Following the recommendation of George Mooney (1900-unknown), then-president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and with the special permission of his Department, he took his position as Director of the Saint John Town Planning Commission in the spring of 1944 at the age of 34.[30]

Merrett's arrival in Saint John seems to have been the subject of considerable fanfare. The city provided him with a Buick to drive and he initially took up residence in an apartment building at 206 Germain Street, a highly desirable street in the city centre and home to many of the city's economic and social elite (see figure 1).[31] Merrett would move several times in the few months he spent in the city with his family. Several apartments in the city, a house in the railway suburb of East Riverside, and cottages in the villages outside of Rothesay would house the young married couple: Merrett and his wife Hazel.[32] Merrett remarks on the difficulty with which they adjusted to life in the city, stating:

> Saint Johners are not noted for their instant hospitality to outsiders from Upper Canada, and our social life for the first 6 months or so was not very active. Fortunately, however, we knew some people in Rothesay (Montrealers married to Saint Johners or vice-versa) and between them and the efforts made by the Mayor to find us a house out of town, we were able to rent for the winter months a house in East Riverside.[33]

Members of City commissions, prominent businesspeople, and artists were among the Merrett's friends. Their second son was born in the Saint John General Hospital in the summer of 1945—while M. Gerald Teed, a friend and a member of the Town Planning Commission, provided

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29 John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, Book 9, Page 44.
30 Ibid. 62.
31 Ibid. 62.
32 Ibid. 72.
33 Ibid. 72.

lodging for Merrett and his eldest son near the hospital at the time of the birth.[34] The Merrett's time in Saint John would be brief. In the same summer, Merrett notes that though, "Saint John wanted me to stay on indefinitely … I did not relish a lifetime as a civil servant, especially in the somewhat depressing ambiance of Canada's oldest incorporated municipality."[35] Merrett would return to his family in Montreal in time for Christmas, 1945. However, he maintained contact with the city and the Province for some time following his employment. Merrett was the delegate that represented the Province of New Brunswick at the founding conference of the Community Planning Association of Canada, which took place in Ottawa in October of 1946. Eric Arthur and C.D. Howe wrote extensively in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* on this conference in the journal's November 1946 issue.[36]

Campbell Merrett's Distinct Readership: Local and National

The 1946 plan is a ninety page document printed in colour with diagrams, maps, charts, illustrations, site plans and renderings included. The plan's proposals are not only concerned with the usual domains of land-use planning and zoning regulations, the document addresses transportation and infrastructure, as well as housing, City finances, social ills, and design review (see figure 2). Though this is commonplace in present-day municipal plans, the 1946 plan is the first such plan produced in Saint John. A previous plan, prepared under the supervision of Thomas Adams (1871-1940) between 1917 and 1922 was concerned simply with land use and road alignment. The 1946 plan accomplished a considerable analysis of the city while simultaneously illustrating a rich and flourishing vision for the future. In this imagined future,

34 Ibid. 75.
35 Ibid. 65.
36 Ibid. 65.

key sites are redesigned in a strikingly modernist style—with simplified geometry and irregular lot placement in the otherwise tightly-gridded city's central business district (see figure 3). Curiously, however, Merrett's illustration of this reimagined Market Slip includes the retention of several prominent buildings facing on the square, such as the Bank of British North America and the Domville building (constructed in 1914 and 1878, respectively).[37] These buildings, as well as several then-extant Victorian commercial buildings, maintain their highly visible positions on the square's corners. The retention of these structures challenges current understandings of Merrett's remarks. Though only proposed in an architectural rendering (and without their retention expressly stated), their inclusion suggest a more complex view of the city's built environment than what both Merrett and his present-day critics had previously expressed. This and further expressions of Merrett's architectural imagination combine with precise and deliberate language in the plan's striking and richly-detailed text. Though in principle a technical, government document, the plan is a detailed insight into the postwar milieu of Saint John.

A range of both published and unpublished proposals detail the plan's rich value as a treatise of Canadian postwar architecture and planning. The plan exhibits tremendous literary value.[38] Merrett's series of transformational interventions as presented to a national audience through trade and popular literature further cement this value of the 1946 plan. An unpublished proposal for King Square, another public square at the centre of the city's central business district, demonstrates the complexity of the plan's proposals vis à vis the city's built environment. This document replaces fixtures of the city's public infrastructure iteratively. It

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[37] Ernst Isbell Barott (1884-1966), a partner in Merrett's later firm of Barott, Marshall, Montgomery & Merrett, designed the Bank of British North America's branch at Market Square. See the *Saint John Globe* (June 2, 1914): 8.

[38] See Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* 6-15.

does not demand the razing of the urban centre, nor does it propose its reconstruction (as would proposed many documents from Saint John's urban renewal era). By today's standards, the proposal to demolish the City Market Building, built in 1877, and to rebuild it on another site would be unacceptable to the public (see figure 4). Further still, the construction of a roadway through the city's Loyalist Burial Ground—a cemetery used by settlers between May of 1783 and the mid-1830s—would draw similar, fervent criticism. In the postwar era, however, the plan proposed the replacement of an aging public building and the streamlining of automobile circulation without the wholesale reconstruction of the built environment.

Thus, as the plan and the unpublished documents that surround it propose the gradual reconstruction and re-organization of the built environment, the current literature of the 1946 plan decontextualizes much of Merrett's work. In the context of the entire document, his remarks (as his renderings) are rhetorical devices. They combine to form a compelling means of enacting (as Merrett would argue) positive change. These remarks are not reproduced in summaries of the plan (written for non-stakeholder audiences). Through the careful comparison of the plan text's abundance of editorialized commentary with representations of Saint John made in the plan's summary Merrett's complex understanding of Saint John emerges. His interpretation, as an outsider, is a key point in understanding the legacy of the plan but also its transformative impact on planning practice in Canada. From both local and national perspectives, one is left asking: is it possible to account for the lived experiences of citizens when producing a municipal plan? Further, when making criticisms of the city—those widely reproduced in Leroux's work—is criticism truly meant as such? Does Merrett's reading of the city's built environment exist solely as a political tool? Most importantly of all: could such a political tool ever have produced an equitable outcome? From the perspective of a national historical discourse, the plan raises

entirely new questions. How does the plan impacts other cities? How do government funding models adapt—if at all—to the demands of Saint John's unique context?

This document deserves a close reading as a political instrument, as a professional treatise, and as a harbinger of ambitious government programs all existing in parallel in the early postwar. A complex understanding of the plan's key sections, teeming with valuable editorial commentary, first allows for a glimpse at Saint John as seen by Merrett. Canada's fourth largest at Confederation, the city of Saint John had stagnated to become fourteenth largest by the time of his arrival in 1944.[39] Scholars generally agree that the city's decline was a by-product of trade policies, a failure to adapt to declines in shipbuilding, and the growing intrusion of policy-boosted Central Canadian business in the region.[40] The population of the Saint John Metropolitan Area, per the 1941 census, was 65,784, of which 79% lived in the city and 21% in the metropolitan fringe area.[41] Between 1931 and 1941, a 1946 *Housing* Atlas published by the Minster of Trade and Commerce notes, the metropolitan fringe area grew rapidly, increasing in size by some 25%.[42] Merrett's plan responds to these challenges directly by proposing the modernization of the urban core, the reduction of net lot density through zoning regulation, and the concentration of infrastructure spending and land acquisition to bolster city industries. The intent was to reduce density, which meant fewer people living and working in the core. These citizens were to benefit in turn from more space and new community facilities in newly developed areas of the city.[43] At its core, the 1946 plan engaged not only with the local political and economic climate. Moreover, the plan anticipated and leveraged the rapidly expanding

39 "Youth in Age in a Timeless Seaport," *MacLean's* 66, vol. 2 (January 15, 1953): 10.
40 Nerbas, "Adapting to Decline," 152-153.
41 Ibid. 1.
42 Ibid. 1.
43 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 41-45.

policy reforms of the postwar boom . The 1946 plan's legislated effort to reduce density is exacerbated by subsidies in the *National Housing Act.* The architecture of reduced density (the detached, single house) is the greatest architectural intervention in Saint John's built environment in the twentieth century.

Merrett writes directly to the Saint John Town Planning Commission in a Letter of Transmittal, the second section of the 1946 plan. Common Council formed the Commission in 1914 and in 1946, it was composed of councillors, members of the public, and prominent citizens. Merrett's remarks clearly were meant to stir action and to overcome the inertia of these individuals' social and fiscal conservatism, given the committee's composition and the propensity of the city's elite to participate actively in civic life. [44] Past scholars have drawn the majority of the quotes that inform their portrayal of Merrett and the plan from this letter of transmittal. These include including Merrett's assertion that: "Saint John has few, if any, points of true architectural or aesthetic merit and … the prevailing character is one of drabness and lack of civic pride."[45] This criticism is written only in the letter of transmittal, a document intended for Merrett's local and professionally-engaged audience. Adjacent to these remarks—indeed, in the same paragraph—Merrett jarred his readership a second time, writing: "The younger generation of Saint John citizens is fully conscious of the nature of its surroundings and its natural desire for beauty is not submerged by false sentiment nor by apathy."[46] Thus, Merrett further amplified pressure by separating the city into two demographics: young and old. Merrett suggested, by not clearly defining the 'old,' that this second category is responsible for the dereliction and the drabness. In distinguishing a younger generation from this status quo, Merrett

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44 Nerbas, "Adapting to Decline,"173.
45 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 6.
46 Ibid. 6.

challenged those who held power in the city—among them, members of his own commission.[47] Merrett's remarks in this section were meant to speak directly to his peers on the planning commission—his letter of transmittal, though included in the published text of the 1946 plan, is addressed to "John N. Flood, Esq. Chairman, and Members of the Saint John Town Planning Commission."[48] Merrett emphasizes the timelines of change and the urgency with which it was to be undertaken through this deliberate and rhetorical comparison. In his other writing—particularly in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* and in *The Standard*—Merrett does not reproduce this criticism. Rather, these documents highlight the opportunities provided by the city and its challenges.

Merrett describes precisely the great difficulty of making necessary changes in the text of the Letter of Transmittal. while using language designed to further draw the attention of his powerful audience. He addresses both physical and social barriers; seemingly collapsing the two into a single "difficult topography," to which he makes frequent reference.[49] As Merrett stated: "criticism will doubtless be levelled at certain proposals on the ground that the natural obstacles are too great to permit the suggested development."[50] He continues, writing that modern machines alone will render the challenge "small in comparison with those which the Loyalist founders of the city and their successors who have developed it have overcome with none of the facilities and equipment available to us today," despite the challenges of the hilly and rocky

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47 Of note, the commission's membership included Lewis Simms, the owner of a large manufacturing firm and a key character in Nerbas' "Adapting to Decline," and Harry Claire Mott, a local architect and fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. For further information on Mott, see Gary Hughes, Music of the Eye: Architectural Drawings of Canada's First City 1822-1914 (Saint John, NBM Publications MNB, 1991) and "Mott, Harry Claire," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1878.

48 Ibid. 6.

49 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 296.

50 Ibid. 6.

landscape.[51] Here, Merrett writes strategically and addresses his readership directly. The meaning of this remark is twofold, addressing both the physical challenge of the "hilly and rocky landscape," and the severe public criticism that these proposals would surely draw, according to Merrett's estimation. To evoke the city's "Loyalist founders" served to strengthen Merrett's appeal to a local elite audience. As the American historian Maya Jasnoff explains in her book *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, the Loyalist refugees that fled the fledgling United States in 1783 comprised a cross-section of pre-revolutionary society.[52] However, according to the Saint John-based historian Greg Marquis, the image of the Loyalist in the context of Saint John is a powerful evocation of class and a means of signalling white, anglophone and Protestant men.[53] Indeed, Jasnoff suggests that at the time of the arrival of the Loyalists in the summer of 1783, the city of Saint John struggled with intense class conflict. Founding Governor Thomas Carleton and Edward Winslow, Jasnoff notes, sought to create the "neo-feudal oligarchy of their dreams, crafting a government that would be, in Winslow's revealing phrase 'the most Gentlemanlike on Earth,'" seemingly at the expense of civil liberties.[54]

Though Merrett's remark is factually correct—as many streets in the city's core were laid out in the Loyalist's town platt (see figure 5)—the remark is moreover an appeal to white citizens' power and influence. Merrett's plan does little to challenge established power structures, despite advocating for changes to the city's built environment to improve social conditions. While evoking a complex paradigm in the history of the city, the reference

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51 Ibid. 6-7.

52 Maya Jasnoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 8.

53 See Greg Marquis, "Commemorating the Loyalists in the Loyalist City: Saint John, New Brunswick, 1883–1934," *Urban History Review* 33, vol. 1 (2004): 24-33.

54 Jasnoff, *Liberty's Exiles,* 182.

constituted an intimate appeal to the identity of his prominent and powerful audience. The appeal to a common Loyalist ancestry (an identity, according to Marquis, that is almost entirely devoid of genealogical accuracy) highlights the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a limited group of people. As Leroux suggests in *The Lost City*, problems of class, race, and religion would feature heavily in the so-called urban renewal period—with the largest of the city's renewal projects displacing impoverished and racialized persons in the environs of Main Street North, Courtney Bay, and the Portland Valley between 1960 and the mid-1970s.[55] Given the tension between Merrett's own privileged background and his rhetoric, it is difficult to interpret the plan's intended impact on the city's disenfranchised. Decidedly, the language of the plan centres around the notion of 'beauty,' which, although it touches on housing, does not advance an argument for equality. As I will examine later, the changes proposed by the 1946 plan would provide broad targets for city leadership. As the proposals of the 1946 plan would undergo several iterations before their execution during the urban renewal period, these vague but socially responsible aims appear to have been lost. The later period ultimately facilitated the concentration of public resources among the interests of a growing white, Anglophone middle class, as Marquis has suggested. The 1946 plan equips decision makers with the language and the supporting documents to undertake these projects. Compared to the 1956 *Urban Renewal Study,* the 1946 plan proposes a vastly more equitable outcome—particularly in the domain of housing.

This is in part why I propose to look at Merrett's rhetoric as a means of nuancing current critiques of the 1946 plan. Merrett's deployment of rhetorical devices throughout the 1946 plan's Letter of Transmittal illustrates his awareness of the city's power structure that present-day

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[55] Leroux, *The Lost City*, 17-18.

scholars have studied. The first section of the plan, the 'Letter of Transmittal' offers further insight into Merrett's working conditions. Saint John's "difficult topograph[ies]," as they fused social and geographical challenges, demonstrate Merrett's contribution to professional planning practice. Merrett wrote to a professional audience in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (*JRAIC*). His short summary of the plan presents insight into his process, challenges he faced while working on the plan, and offers a more optimistic portrayal of Saint John and its future than presented to members of the Town Planning Commission. The summary further reveals the prominence of the 1946 plan among early postwar planning efforts. Clearly, the plan emerged in professional discourse at a key moment in the entwined histories of architecture and planning in Canada.

Merrett introduced Saint John to the *JRAIC* readership in a special edition dedicated to the practice of professional planning in Canada (see figure 6). The *JRAIC* was the preeminent trade publication for architects in Canada at this time. Its editor was then the prominent modernist architect and educator Eric Arthur (1898-1982).[56] This issue challenged practitioners of architecture to rise to meet the demands of postwar building booms, particularly where these booms provided an opportunity to enhance the character of Canadian cities. The special issue further argued that town planning was the means to achieve civic and social improvement on a large scale. Fifty pages in length, the issue collected thirteen summarized plans for Canadian cities as well as eight plan summaries prepared for small communities in Ontario. Most plan summaries reproduce zoning maps, gridded and dotted with (illegible) symbols. Certain plans feature large, fold-out colour maps. John Bland's plan for St. John's Newfoundland features a

[56] For more information on Eric Arthur, see the special issue, edited by Harold Kalman and Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe, of the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 42, no. 2, (2017).

fold-out zoning map: it illustrates a jumbled maze of streets and conflicting land-use perched on the city's rocky hillside. Four essays complement the collection of plan summaries. An editorial, a piece on the newly-formed Community Planning Association of Canada, a commentary on professional planning practice, and an essay by the Minister of Reconstruction, C.D. Howe, set a tone in which plans were presented as examples to be emulated. All of the plan summaries called for the mobilization of the architectural profession as planning quickly gained national significance. The importance of Merrett's summary to this rapid advancement is evidenced by its high level of detail, particularly when compared to other summaries. This special issue is a turning point in the practice of professional planning in Canada and Merrett's plan was complete, unique, and a significant methodological undertaking. For these reasons, it stands out among similar initiatives.

Eric Arthur's introductory editorial set high stakes for postwar architects. The text begins mockingly, referencing the London *Evening Standard*'s 'Colonel Blimps' [sic] cartoon. Arthur recounts that Blimps, a satirist's jab at the British establishment, at the beginning of the war "would frequently tell us that God protected, with a very special care, those who did not plan. The favoured were, of course all Anglo-Saxons. The Wicked Germans were outside the pale, and so were the Russians who were doubly damned as 'plan-conscious' and godless. The unprepared Anglo-Saxon would always win the last battle."[57] Though here presented in jest, the remark is itself a jab at Canadian architects, deemed unprepared to face the challenge of the postwar. It surely is no coincidence that the remark also maintains the supremacy of white, Anglophone protestants. In this way this text shares a common tone with Merrett's letter of transmittal. Arthur continues, stating:

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[57] *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 266.

> To what extent we planned, and to what extent we blundered through, is for history to decide. There are many signs that we are blundering through peace, but some hopeful signs stand out that give the ordinary citizen, in Canada, some hope. The activities of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board are one, but they, like so many others, can plan only for short terms. They have no five year plan.[58]

If Canadians (with architects at the forefront) were indeed beginning to blunder through peacetime, Arthur presents planning as the antidote. He notes the formation of the Community Planning Association of Canada (CPA) as "one of the most heartening signs of recent times."[59] This organization cemented the influence of the architects over professional planning in Canada for a considerable amount of time. The *JRAIC* mounts an offensive against planning's pre-existing professional body. The role that Merrett and his plan for Saint John played in this professional coup is evident in his involvement with the formation of the CPA and in the plan's assumption of a broad spectrum of planning matters, far beyond the scope of both previous plans for Saint John and plans produced in Canada, generally. These new areas of interest include economic development and urban design, which are clear priorities of the 1946 plan for Saint John.

The CPA was formed at a national conference in mid-October of 1946.[60] The CPA survives today only in scattered provincial chapters, but during the immediate postwar the association benefitted from the considerable interest of architects and from the considerable patronage of the CMHC. Merrett, though not Director of the Saint John Town Planning Commission, was the New Brunswick delegate at the CPA's foundational conference.[61] Their goal was simply to "revive the moribund Town Planning Institute."[62] Stated in its bylaws, this

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58 Ibid. 266.
59 Ibid. 266.
60 Ibid. 268.
61 John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, 65.
62 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 268. The Town

amounted to "the object of the Association shall be to foster public understanding of, and participation in, Community Planning in Canada."[63] Its membership in 1946 suggests a higher degree of control was allotted to architects and engineers, who held a combined 6 seats on the organization's council, than to planners. Planners were represented on the council by a delegate from the Town Planning Institute (now the Canadian Institute of Planners, CIP), but this vast professional body was guaranteed only a single seat.[64]

Frequent references are made to "moribund" planning in Canada. This appears to be a partial truth, reinforced by the *JRAIC,* to communicate the urgency of Canada's planning needs to architects. This resulted in the rapid creation of opportunities for architects under the provisions of the *National Housing Act* to begin a planning practice. The effect, however, was the exclusion of a long history of planning—particularly as it developed in the Maritimes.[65] Eric Arthur detailed a future in which formerly "moribund boards whose members [knew] that their efforts will go through two inevitable stages—ridicule followed by oblivion," would be replaced with, "boards [that] would attract the best people in the community because no greater opportunity for service exists in our modern society."[66] The local influence of Merrett's Town Planning Commission in shaping developments demonstrates this was already the reality in Saint John. Interestingly, this passage in the *JRAIC* draws heavily on rhetoric that also appears to have abounded in Saint John. The City of Saint John's benchmark public housing initiatives,

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Planning Institute of Canada (Renamed the Canadian Institute of Planners in 1974) is founded in 1919. As Michael Simpson suggests, this early organization struggled to achieve the widespread adoption of planning practices across Canada, with uptake limited to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. See Canadian Institute of Planners, *CIP 100*, accessed June 23, 2020, cip-icu.ca/100.

63 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 268.

64 Ibid. 268.

65 The creation of this alternate narrative likely influenced the CIP's literature, in turn. The literature published during CIP 100 celebrations in 2019 made no mention of Merrett's 1946 plan, despite its having received a major award a mere five years prior.

66 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 266.

completed many years before their Central Canadian counterparts, are one manifestation of wartime collectivism that I will examine later in this thesis.

Arthur articulated this prewar rhetoric most clearly when he declared: "the progress will be slow, but the alternative of useful, arduous work followed by reasoned judgement, intelligent criticism and action, within the means of the community to carry out a plan, in whole or in part, is something worth fighting for."[67] Here, Arthur drew on prewar or wartime collectivism, and not a liberal-humanist ideal one might associate with the postwar. Len Kuffert, in his *A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture in Canada: 1939-1967*, elaborates on the former attitude, in which wartime "seekers after a new cultural order hoped that Canada could be reinvented as a nation of citizens who heeded their responsibilities and obligations to the community and to the democratic ideal."[68] Cultural critics from the postwar era, like David Riesman and current literary scholars like Andrew Hoberek, describe a postwar transition away from collectivism and towards liberal humanism.[69] Though removed from the immediate concern of planners and architects, this rhetoric appears to inform beliefs and biases articulated in the *JRAIC*. As argues Hoberek, a postwar economic shift towards white-collar labour destabilized the formerly independent American middle class (and is reflected in a range of literary works).[70] Facing large-scale dispossession, Hoberek suggests the middle class sought refuge in David Riesman's "inner directed" or "outer directed" binary and abandoned the collectivist language of the war.[71] An increasingly media-literate Canadian public emerged after

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67 Ibid. 266.

68 Len Kuffert, *A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture in Canada: 1939-1967* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 66.

69 See David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1950) and Andrew Hoberek, *The Twilight of the Middle Class: Post-World War II American Fiction and White Collar Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

70 Hoberek, *The Twilight of the Middle Class*, 6.

71 Ibid. 8. Riesman understood progress as a transformation of the individuals' self-perceived place in the

the Second World War. Popular publications became venues for debates on the specifics of postwar life. *Saturday Night* is a prominent example used by Kuffert, but *MacLean's* and *The Standard* also published material specific to planning in Saint John.[72] Kuffert argues that "planning promised a level of control over an uncertain future."[73] Where the *JRAIC* so heavily stoked hopes for a better future, documents like Merrett's summary become key fixtures for a ravenous audience. In this instance, his audience was a broad network of professionals suddenly tasked with the reconstruction of everyday life in Canada.

Conscious of an ever-growing public interest in planning, Arthur anticipated the CPA's responsibility to a large audience— itself distinct, but equally ravenous. According to Arthur, the mass-media would communicate the importance of adequate planning, stating:

> Suitable films do not exist in North America. [Extant films are] strong meat and unintelligible for a community that has been led to believe that slums are a necessary part of our civilization, or that the rape of the countryside by indiscriminate residential subdivisions is the post war utopia … we have the highest regard for the competence and wisdom in these matters of our own [National] Film Board. It would take time, but they could make the films. If the cause is worthwhile, the cost should not be counted.[74]

Here, Arthur advocated for the continuation of the wartime practice of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). Relying on an impressive network of community volunteer-run screening facilities and distribution networks, the growth of the NFB under the leadership of John Grierson (1898-1972) was staggering.[75] Yet, political interference at the NFB by the Louis St. Laurent

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social order. He hypothesizes this binary to account for a variety of individuals' behaviours and socio-economic trends, but generally concluded that human character could not fathom the potential of the postwar era. This disconnect, he argues, allows pessimism to fester and social progress to stall.

72 Specific issues include *MacLean's* (January 15, 1953) and *The* Standard (June 2, 1945). See figure 22.

73 Kuffert, *A Great Duty*, 78. *Saturday Night* was a major Canadian public affairs and arts publication, which was printed in Toronto between 1887 and 2005.

74 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 266.

75 Gary Evans, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada: 1949-1989 (*Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 8.

government began shortly after the end of the Second World War.[76] The RCMP pursued and exposed alleged communists at the behest of Grierson's successor, Ross MacLean (1905-1984) shortly after he assumed his role as Commissioner in 1945.[77] While not necessarily indicative of the NFB's ideological realignment, this development raises important questions about subsequent NFB productions and their underlying rhetoric.[78] This is particularly interesting, as a mouthpiece of the architectural profession placed immense faith in the productions of the NFB and these post-persecution features would be widely circulated during the urban renewal era.[79]

Arthur's remarks are important points of reference when contemplating the place of Merrett's plan—indeed, even its mere summary—in the shaping of planning practice in the early postwar. Suddenly, with the end of the war, architects' trade literature suggested that their profession had assumed the burdens of reconstruction. Arthur believed that architects would exert considerable influence over the postwar period. He wrote:

> In Town Planning and Housing there may be no last battle to win. Indeed, we may have lost it if large sections of our urban and rural communities lie occupied by the forces of congestion, poverty, and despair. Housing will not catch up with the slum-dwellers in the lifetime of those who read this *Journal*, but, for their children there is hope if the C.P.A. carries on an underground fight that will eventually command the respect and the support of the whole country.[80]

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76 Malek Khouri argues that while the federal government tolerated the NFB's high degree of labour advocacy during the war, once the war ended and John Grierson resigned the government pressured the NFB to abandon its wartime advocacy. See Malek Khouri, *Filming Politics: Communism and the Portrayal of the Working Class at the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-1946* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 193-225.

77 Gary Marcuse and Reginald Whittaker, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1997), 243.

78 Particular attention should be paid to 1951's *Farewell Oak* Street, directed by Ross MacLean's brother, Grant MacLean. The film deals with urban renewal directly, as it chronicles the construction of Toronto's Regent Park. The film is highly rhetorical and associates social problems like alcoholism, domestic violence, and truancy with the housing conditions of the fictionalized residents of Toronto's Oak Street. The film frames these as an 'everyman' struggle—with Regent Park meant to be a model development to be reproduced across the country.

79 Newspaper records indicate that a variety of theatres and arts institutions in New Brunswick showed *Farewell Oak Street.* The Beaverbrook Art Gallery showed the film in 1960. See *The Daily Gleaner* (February 10, 1960): 1. In Moncton, in 1954, Famous Players' theatres advertised the film in two newspapers. See *The Moncton Daily Times* (March 8, 1954): 6 and *Moncton Transcript* (March 8, 1954): 5. Commercial theatres or community groups likely showed the film in Saint John.

80 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 266.

As architects, a collected professional body, gradually assumed control of town planning practice, one is left questioning the adequacy of resources and programs that supported these ambitious goals. Eric Arthur believed that other federal agencies, like the NFB, would assist in this reconstruction project. Further to this support, at the time of his writing in 1946, a major shift in policy amendments to housing legislation would considerably bolster the effectiveness of architects in acting on a shared professional vision.

C. D. Howe, the then-federal minister of Reconstruction and Supply, provided vital information concerning the rapid change of federal policies in the postwar. Howe suggested the federal government designed these changes to support architect-planners directly, though municipal planning and land-use regulation fell under provincial jurisdiction. As Howe explains plainly, communities that desired access to funding through the *National Housing Act* were required to have completed community plans.[81] These postwar amendments dramatically increased the availability of federal subsidy to create, new housing.[82] However, as Ann McAfee notes, this program excluded federal-provincial-municipal tri-level funding for housing until 1949.[83] Howe argued that the responsibility for the successful proliferation of planning in Canada rested with architects, stating: "Architects therefore have, in my opinion, a great responsibility in the future advancement of community planning."[84] Howe raised already considerable stakes though it is difficult to conclude whether or not the knowledge and the skillset of architects suited these challenges. Discounting the innumerable logistical challenges that faced Campbell Merrett and his team in Saint John, the design practices of an architect and

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81 Ibid. 267.

82 Ann McAfee, "Housing and Housing Policy," The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed June 23, 2020, https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/housing-and-housing-policy.

83 Ibid.

84 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 267.

of a planner remain considerably different. A more adequate conclusion suggests that plans completed at the time of the *JRAIC*'s publication in November of 1946 made for examples after which communities modeled their own planning schemes. Of considerable length, Merrett's plan summary for Saint John is information-rich and details the course of events on which many other plan summaries could merely speculate.

The *JRAIC*'s made its authoritative intervention as an important paradigm in postwar architecture was emerging. When Parliament amended the *National Housing Act* in 1945 to create the CMHC, tremendous government patronage was precipitated. Howe justified these changes, in part, by the challenges of planning for postwar cities. However, these subsidies did not anticipate the needs of slow-growing and established Canadian centres. In these places, subsidies encouraged reduced density and an increased number of detached single family homes. In Saint John, this proved to be complicated. Difficult topographies presented significant challenges to the development of detached, single family housing developments. Yet, as planners and their allies routinely took to local newspapers to advocate for progress (see figures 7 and 8), planners in Saint John do not appear to have been the subject of "ridicule" and "oblivion,"[85] as Eric Arthur suggested. The maturity of planning practice in Saint John drew on a long and influential heritage of dating to the decades prior to the formation of the Town Planning Commission in 1913. In the postwar, I argue that this sophisticated planning heritage allowed proposals to capitalize on the subsidies of the *National Housing* Act. Where the city's planning practices extend well beyond Merrett's brief tenure, iterative revision would dramatically alter the 1946 plan's proposals by the time of the city's urban renewal period.

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[85] Ibid. 266.

While Merrett makes no mention of reproducibility in his plan summary, his and several other plan summaries collected in the *JRAIC* addressed the challenges of planning in established and more slow-growing cities, typical of the Maritimes. These plan summaries compose three of the thirteen included in the issue. The ten additional summaries detail plans for booming Central and Western Canadian cities including Winnipeg (Manitoba), Hamilton, Etobicoke, and Stratford (Ontario). Eugene Faludi (unknown-1981), Anthony Adamson (1906-2002), and their firm Town Planning Consultants Limited (TPC) alone produced nine of these further ten summaries.[86] Though the volume is significant, the TPC plans occupy only 18 of the issue's 41 pages. The Maritime plans differ substantially from these plans, as they generally aimed to tackle an existing structural problem in addition to determining the pattern for future development. Both Harold Lawson's plan for central Halifax and John Bland's plan for St. John's in the then-Dominion of Newfoundland make for interesting comparisons to Merrett's plan for Saint John and shed light on precisely the slew of problems that afflicted planners working in established, slow-growing cities. Each of the plan authors described the boom-bust economic hardships experienced throughout the history of their cities. In addition to these economic hardships, the struggle with traffic circulation, existing grids of streets, and the inefficient use of land abounded in each of the three cases. In the cases of Saint John and Halifax, streets in the cities' centres were laid out in the late eighteenth century by the British Army and in St. John's streets had developed from

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86 Eugene Faludi was a Hungarian-born architect and planner who had a significant practice in Italy. His influence, according to the Canadian Institute of Planners, guided land use planning practice in Ontario from its beginnings in the 1930s. His 1944 Master Plan of *Toronto and Environs* is a significant development in regional planning. For more information, see a biography maintained by the CIP's College of Fellows. https://cip-icu.ca/About/College-of-Fellows/Recipients/Eugene-G-Faludi-FCIP-d.

pedestrian paths and cart roads along the city's steep hillside.[87] This, as Harold Lawson would describe, constituted, "obstacles in the path of normal development, and thus add another burden to the city."[88] There is no doubt these conditions were challenging to planners and developers alike. Further, the notion of these conditions being abnormal reflects the consideration these authors made for their national audience. Awareness of differences between the practices of architect-planners working in various places during the immediate postwar demonstrates the sophistication of the professional discourse among Merrett's peers, whose early and influential plans impacted practices around the country.

An amusing newspaper headline written prior to the publication of the *JRAIC* special issue described the difference between planning in Saint John and in Halifax. Lawson boasts plainly on the front page of the *Moncton Transcript* on August 23, 1945 that Halifax is: "Rotten at core."[89] According to Lawson, Halifax posed "more of a problem from a town planning point of view than any other Canadian city with the exception of Saint John, N.B."[90] This hyperbole is important in understanding not only the scale of Merrett's plan, but also the notoriety his efforts gained among his peers. Merrett's connections with other central Canadian architects and institutions remain a likely explanation for the exposure his plan received in the *JRAIC*. This, it seems, extended beyond the mere scope of professional literature, and became something reiterated in popular press, as evidenced by this newspaper coverage and the publication of another version of Merrett's plan summary in *The Standard* in June of 1945. The interest of the

87 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 296, 299, 303.
88 Ibid, 299.
89 Editorial, *Moncton Transcript* (August 23, 1945): 1.
90 Ibid. Lawson's frustrations are likely a product of the ongoing struggle between the municipal government and the armed forces of both Canada and the United Kingdom in addition to a topography like that of Saint John. Lawson would later identify large and scattered military installations as sites that would need to be acquired and redeveloped to facilitate Halifax's transition into the postwar when summarizing his plan in the *JRAIC*.

New Brunswick press in planning extends well beyond the activities of postwar practitioners, to the birth of the Saint John Town Planning Commission and the adoption of community planning legislation in New Brunswick in the closing days of the Great War.

The 1946 plan's relatively early completion and adoption suggests Merrett's leadership at the forefront of hybrid architect-planning professionals during the period. It further suggests the Saint John public's receptiveness to change, which is a key rationalization used by city planning staff when determining the course of development in the urban renewal period.[91] The 1946 plan surpasses those of Lawson and Bland in both scope and content at the time of their publication in the *JRAIC*. Occupying three pages and consisting of approximately two thousand and twenty-eight words, Merrett' plan summary made limited use of visual material. Where the rudimentary three-colour zoning maps of both Lawson's plan for Halifax and Bland's plan for St. John's occupied a full page and a fold-out, respectively, Merrett's two maps documenting present conditions and future land use for the city occupied a near-illegible eighth of a page each. Similarly, though Merrett's summary includes both site photography and watercolour renderings, they are reduced in size to accommodate copy. Though likely an editorial decision, this clear emphasis on Merrett's text speaks to the calibre of its content.

Indeed, unlike Lawson and Bland, Merrett's summary covers not only project proposals, but also the process of the plan's creation. Merrett noted the considerable challenges of planning in Saint John: "He [the planner] finds little opportunity to apply standard techniques; no nucleus in which to hinge a pattern of redevelopment; nor any single dominating motive as a common

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91 A variety of documents prepared for the redevelopment of Courtney Place make repeated reference to public support for urban renewal. While this was likely the case, questions remain as to how closely residents of the affected areas were consulted. See *Call for Proposals: Courtney Place*, collection of the Community Planning Office, Saint John.

denominator of the city's many physical problems." Merrett further explained Saint John's distinction from "younger, more rapidly expanding cities,"[92] plagued by a myriad of holdovers from the past (particularly dated infrastructure, narrow and hilly streets, and peculiar land uses). Citing an "unkind topography,"[93] as in his plan's Letter of Transmittal, Merrett wrote of struggles with the inertia of popular support (though not identifying any one opponent). Adapted to his national audience, Merrett's tone is distinct from that of his Letter of Transmittal. Dedicating a tenth of his copy to an overview of the city's history, Merrett writes of its slow decline from pre-Confederation metropolis to, its place as "the 14th 'greater city' of the Dominion."[94] Though afflicted by decline, Merrett maintained the city presented as the "commercial, industrial, and cultural metropolis of New Brunswick."[95] Merrett's interpretation of the city's milieu is consistent with art historical scholarship of the place and the period (both Herring and Niergarth examine the city's artists, who worked quite heavily in community programming during this period).[96] When compared to his infamous remarks on architectural merit and civic pride contained in his letter of transmittal, Merrett's summary illustrated a significantly less dismissive interpretation of Saint John, instead remarking that: "obstacles of unkind topography; the maze of long-established, badly entangled land use; the lack of worthy architecture and of a civic focal point combine to frustrate the planner."[97] Where the remarks in his letter of transmittal (acting as rhetorical devices) burden the image of the city with much harsher language, these same problems are a presented as mere frustrations (and not failures of

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92 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 296.
93 Ibid. 296.
94 Ibid. 296.
95 Ibid. 296.
96 See Niergarth, *The Dignity of Every Human Being* and Karen Herring, "Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin: Ted Campbell and his Studio, Saint John, New Brunswick, in the 1930s and 40s" (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1993).
97 Ibid. 296.

generations) when presented to a national audience. This change in tone suggests Merrett's audience were not as equipped as local audiences to address complex challenges. Rather, the remarks highlighted Saint John as a success story. In my opinion, it serves as a sort of professional endorsement. This tone is reflected throughout the remainder of Merrett's summary, as he further noted that "the city's main employment base is shipping, though it has probably the most healthy diverse industrial development in the Maritimes."[98] Compounding this summary of development activity, he describes "The City Housing Commission, with one unaided low-rental development already to its credit, is preparing an attack on one of the worst slum areas."[99] Merrett praised the city's bright future, stating:

> The disproportionate obsolescence of the developed areas and the natural beauties of the city's site conjure up visions of a new city—modern stores, factories and dwellings to replace the solemn dirty old brick or wood facades; of a new plan to utilise to advantage the irregular terrain, instead of the senseless grid of streets awkwardly and expensively imposed upon rugged hills and valleys—a dream to inspire slick birds-eyes of tomorrow's city.[100]

This vision, the final product of what was close and careful interaction with the city's built environment, yielded a compelling and authoritative example of planning practice in challenging circumstances. Not only did the 1946 plan provide a clear path for Saint John, but it also assisted in articulating the nascent solutions to the challenges of planning in established and slow-growing cities in the national planning discourse.

The plan bears closer resemblance to Harold Lawson's plan for Halifax and John Bland's plan for St. John's, Newfoundland than it does to Central Canadian plans. Merrett's summary offered substantially more tangible solutions to specific problems than these other summaries. Yet, each of these proposals included the elimination of congestion and traffic hazards, the

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98 Ibid. 296
99 Ibid. 297.
100 Ibid. 296

development of new neighbourhoods and civic spaces, and the re-housing of several existing neighbourhoods. Development schemes proposed in plans for Central and Western Canadian cities by Anthony Adamson and Eugene Faludi's firm, Town Planning Consultants Limited included the cities of Regina, Hamilton, Windsor, Peterborough, Stratford, Kenora, Terrace Bay, Etobicoke, and Guelph. Here, the planners applauded Wartime Housing Limited and other government agencies for erecting numerous housing developments for temporary use by wartime workers. These neighbourhoods were adapted for permanent use after the end of the Second World War. They form the backbone of the growing community in each of TPC's plan summaries. These developments were built in Saint John as well. Here, however, they drew Merrett's criticism, as he notes:

> One trouble in Saint John, with its scarcity of good building land, is that not enough of the available land was acquired and developed in time to direct the emergency housing projects to sites of the city's choosing; with the result that to-day the character of two of the best residential sites, newly developed, is blighted architecturally and economically by the rash of emergency cottages.[101]

Though Merrett makes a careful distinction between these and the CMHC's later developments (aesthetically similar to Dominion Court), the point remains: Campbell Merrett sought denser, higher quality development than was provided by federal subsidy both during and immediately after the war, under the provisions of the *National Housing Act*. The more appropriate form, based on Merrett's remarks in the plan and in his summaries, appears to have emerged in Saint John before his arrival in the form of the Rockwood Court Housing Development. Merrett justified his aversion to "emergency cottages" in the plan's land-use rationale, stating:

> The greatest danger to the overall plan is that the desire for private lots, which could have been provided on these city-developed sites according to plan, will encourage owners of land beyond the logical planned development limits to subdivide prematurely, bringing pressure to bear to have their plans approved.[102]

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101 Ibid. 298.
102 Ibid. 298.

Here, Merrett identified two problems: the lack control over the development of new housing—beyond the powers of land use and zoning by-laws—and the accelerating demand for single detached housing. This pressure drove undesirable developments like Dominion Court and forced the City to scramble to service larger-scale, CMHC-backed developments like Portland Place. Perhaps as a result of these pressures, Merrett ended his tenure as Director of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint John.[103] Though he would be retained as a consultant for some months following his return to Montreal, his departure from Saint John meant—at age 37—a life-long withdrawal from the civil service and a foray into his private architecture practice.

Merrett's seemingly abrupt departure from the civil service suggests, in a way, the inadequacy of federal programs that dominated development in Canadian cities for decades. Further, it signalled a schism between the 1946 plan and the later proposals of the urban-renewal period. Though hardly flawed in their intent, CMHC programs were concerned with a single problem. C.D. Howe identified this problem in the *JRAIC,* stating, "half a century ago twice as many Canadians lived in rural areas as in cities and towns; now the picture is reversed."[104] Subsequently, "the great need for housing in the post-war has resulted in the development of unplanned urban fringe areas … [and] the over extension of public services for such areas,"[105] and rendered the object of the *National Housing Act*'s reforms to facilitate the rapid enlargement of municipalities in the first years after the end of the Second World War. These programs favoured detached, single-family developments (as the Saint John Housing Commission would identify) and prioritized the outward growth of a city's boundaries. A major proposal in the 1946 plan for Saint John, the expansion of the city north, towards Milledgeville, addressed this policy

103 John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, Book 13, Page 70.
104 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 267.
105 Ibid. 267.

preference directly. Thus, the CMHC programs in the early postwar era did not favour existing and highly developed municipalities with stable (though growing) populations, such as Saint John, St. John's, or Halifax.[106]

Merrett provided further explanation of this distinction, stating: "Saint John once prospered as one of the world's leading shipbuilding centres. When the wooden clipper was retired, however, prosperity waned and population dropped to climb again slowly and spasmodically."[107] In the example of Etobicoke, planners were tasked with determining "the most desirable locations for residence and industry," "to determine areas to be used as green belt villages," and "to locate necessary schools."[108] By comparison, Merrett's task was not to merely organize the placement of new developments, but, rather, to reorganize existing development, to administer upgrades for safe and efficient road circulation. These goals appear to have attracted development that might assist in the revitalization of an otherwise old and derelict built environment. New development in the city was to be organized by the Planning Commission, with regard to the plan's recommendations. Merrett articulated one resultant challenge cautiously in his *JRAIC* summary: "so scarce were good building sites central enough for horse and buggy days that to-day half of the worst slums occupy land which must be considered unsuitable for residential development, due wither to the nature of the ground or to their location relative to industry, railways or port."[109] To remedy this many-faceted problem, his plan proposed the expansion of new industry into these already industrial-adjacent lands. Housing, he argued, should move away from centres of employment.[110] The creation of new industry on these sites

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106 Ibid. 299.
107 Ibid. 296.
108 Ibid. 293.
109 Ibid. 296.
110 This zoning principle was a commonly held belief among modernist architects and planners. For example,

would, in Merrett's estimation, improve the attractiveness of the city to new developments. These complex proposals exceeded the realms of infrastructure and land-use of previous municipals plans and constituted a significant advancement in the practice of planning in Canada.

Merrett's proposals for urban reorganization were clear: slum clearance was only to be undertaken "when there is an abundance of dwellings."[111] He later detailed that the crucial surplus of housing could be achieved only through development outside of the city's core, under strict direction from a planning staff.[112] Thus, the ill-considered subsidies of the *National Housing Act* were leveraged to the advantage of the city's economic development. Merrett's enthusiasm for Portland Place illustrates precisely how this condition made for a desirable residential development. Only following further amendments made in 1956, did the *National Housing Act* consider urban renewal projects.[113] These critical 10 years could have allowed for surplus housing to accumulate. Don Nerbas explains, however, that Saint John struggled throughout the twentieth century to attract outside capital. City developers would require this capital were they to construct this vast number of new homes. As the thorough adoption of so-called urban renewal projects—whose funding hinged on the demolition of housing—indicates, Saint John failed to meet the key requirement of the 1946 plan's housing strategy by reason of capital shortfall. As Merrett described in his summary, development patterns in Saint John were vastly different than those elsewhere in Canada; thus the latent and destructive impact of

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it was formally articulated in the CIAM's Athens Charter, written in 1933. On this, see William J. R. Curtis, "The Ideal Community: Alternatives to the Industrial City," in *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), 254-255.

111 Ibid. 298.

112 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 34.

113 These amendments would precipitate the 1956 *Urban Renewal Study* produced for the City by Georges Potvin. See Georges Potvin, *City of Saint John Urban Renewal Study* (Toronto: Garden City Press Co-Operative Limited, 1957).

National Housing Act subsidies on the built environment (and on the legacy of Merrett's plan). The *JRAIC* demonstrated that postwar planners operated in one of two broad categories: those that worked to re-tool existing urban centres experiencing limited new growth and those tasked with shepherding throngs of new developments in postwar boom-towns.

Decidedly, the reconstruction of Saint John, New Brunswick, would fall into the former category. The question remains, however: how would existing centres interface with housing policies that, in Merrett's own estimation, created neighbourhoods "blighted architecturally and economically by the rash of emergency cottages"?[114] While these questions remain, Merrett's strong emphasis on industrial growth and improved housing equipped the community to access economic opportunity. Had these schemes not been available, it is my opinion that the city would have struggled to transition successfully into the postwar. The full text of the plan detailed the avenues through which industrial development, transportation infrastructure, housing reconstruction, and architectural monuments enhanced land use efficiency. These proposals are absent from the plan's legacy. These proposals are of particular interest because the changes they underwent between 1946 and the urban renewal era resulted in the widespread demolition of racialized neighbourhoods (the environs of Main Street, Courtney Place, and Chesley Street).[115] A brief examination of Merrett's proposals for improved transportation and for improved housing helps to clarify the legacy of the plan and reveals the network of actors responsible for implementation of the plan's recommendations after their revision during the urban renewal era.

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114 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 298.

115 While the extent to which so-called urban renewal targeted marginalized groups, the Saint John Jewish Historical Museum suggests several businesses along Main Street were longstanding Jewish-run firms. Further, George Elliot Clarke fictionalizes an account of several black-owned business along the same corridor in George Elliot Clarke, *George and Rue* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2005).

The city's postwar scramble to upgrade transportation infrastructure in the immediate postwar aligns with David Harvey's examination of what he dubs, in Marxist terms, "uneven economic development."[116] Harvey's theorization of infrastructure as a veil for the machinations of wealth extraction parallels the local critique of the region's economic development as posited by Donald Savoie in his text *Looking for Bootstraps: Economic Development in the Maritimes* and by Don Nerbas in his MA thesis, "The Changing World of the Bourgeoisie in Saint John, New Brunswick in the 1920s." The distinction between the proposals of the 1946 plan and the implementation of these recommendations over the ensuing decades clarifies the legacy of the 1946 plan. Savoie identified the Saint Lawrence Seaway as a catalyst in the city's scramble to regain its economic relevance. Savoie's argument, together with Harvey's explanation of class-alliance as the means through which transformational development is achieved, offers an explanation for the architecturally anomalous Saint John Harbour Bridge. Struggles with transportation infrastructure feature heavily in Saint John's narratives; these infrastructural sagas span much of the city's history.[117] Merrett works in the shadow of the 'Maritime Rights' movement, which underlined the region's reliance on affordable rail connections to Central and Western Canada, as had been guaranteed at Confederation.[118] To the workers and to the industries of Saint John in particular, these rail subsidies represented an economic lifeline when trade across international borders was tightly controlled, relative to tariff-free interprovincial trade. As the winter port of choice when the St. Lawrence was iced-over, Saint John was the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway's Eastern Main Line and a major centre for exports on

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116 David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso Books, 2019), 71-116.

117 See Harold Wright and Joseph Goguen, *Bridging Saint John Harbour* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2013).

118 Savoie, *Looking for Bootstraps*, 73-175.

the Canadian National (previously the Intercolonial) Railway.[119] These networks featured heavily in Merrett's re-imagining of the city's industrial waterfront. The plan anticipated an increase in new manufacturing and suggested so-called slum clearance and railroad realignment to accommodate it. As successive iterations of Merrett's plan's proposals were implemented, these traditional lifelines evaporated—even more rapidly following the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway a decade following the plan's adoption.[120] These challenges would appear to play a central role in local decision making, particularly as successive governments would struggle with this variety of new and longstanding economic paradigms. These—more than the proposals of the 1946 plan, I argue—would influence the course of development during the so-called urban renewal era.

The Impact of Economic Realities on Planning in Saint John

As Nerbas explores in detail in his article "Adapting to Decline: The Changing Business World of the Bourgeoisie in Saint John, NB, in the 1920s," the reliance of the city's economy on its winter port was a symptom of Central Canadian control over capital—the key to the Maritimes' economic growth and diversification. [121] Nerbas utilizes the notion of "underdevelopment" to describe both the stagnation of the Maritimes' economy following Confederation and its struggle to acquire capital, as does Harvey in his other case studies. Instead of creating a parallel narrative to those of smaller communities—where changing economic realities meant utter ruin—Nerbas' study of Saint John businesses reveals a complex struggle to adapt to shrinking support from Canadian markets.[122] According to Nerbas, during the 1920s, bourgeois Saint John reconfigured

119 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John,* 52.
120 Savoie, *Looking for Bootstraps,* 127-154.
121 Ibid. 157.
122 Nerbas, "Adapting to Decline," 155.

its priorities to adjust to a new era in Canadian capitalism. He identifies members of the community and each's role in the community's struggle for survival. He criticizes economic pressures emanating from Central Canada. He explains, while earlier generations commanded the capital and the political clout required to transition the city's economy, by the 1920s, bourgeois leaders were suffering the consequences of some four decades' capital export (meaning, simply, that more money was collected in deposits at city banks than was made available in loans). Donald Savoie argues that federal government policies secured the growth of Central Canadian manufacturing and the settlement of Western Canada at the expense of the Maritimes.[123] By the time of Merrett's departure from Saint John, it seems the federal government's housing subsidies would constitute this long sought-after capital. [124]

Nerbas argues that Saint John's leaders, as population stagnated and vulnerable manufacturing firms shuttered, believed that development in the city and of its economy would rely on their success in attracting capital from outside the region.[125] Though he notes that Saint John's bourgeoisie were weary of state intervention in the market, Nerbas cites the nationalization of the Port of Saint John in 1930 as a turning point in the relationship between business and government.[126] However, as "the centralization of economic power in Central Canada continued to influence the economic decisions of bourgeois Saint John residents in ways that hurt the city," neither business nor government presented an adequate solution.[127] The compromise would propose, "promoting tourist traffic as well as the growing interest in resource development," as the local bourgeoisie grew to understand "the limits to Saint John's potential

123 See Savoie, *Looking for Bootstraps*, 73-90.
124 Nerbas, "Adapting to Decline," 172.
125 Ibid. 172.
126 Ibid. 182.
127 Ibid. 184-185.

within the new Canadian economy."[128] The consolidation of power within this relatively small group, as has briefly been explored earlier in this thesis, is one particularly problematic paradigm that connects prewar and postwar developments. The adaptation of the 1946 plan's proposals to suit available funding is a simple explanation for urban renewal proposals. Simply, local elites desired external capital and the federal government provided ample funding opportunities. The study of the 1946 plan's proposals demonstrates the degree to which the availability of subsidies transformed urban design. The pressures of federal policy raise important questions around access to power, which should be explored further in future research.

Mid-century policy, which favoured Central Canadian manufacturing, placed tremendous pressure on Saint John's economy. On road circulation—a key area of investment, as the winter port became increasingly less viable—Merrett provided recommendations for dramatic improvements that allowed for the smooth development of industry. Indeed, this proposal is a core change proposed in Merrett's housing strategy. While infrastructure spending prioritized the modernization of existing roads and the elimination of serious safety hazards throughout the city, housing is shifted away from the core to the north.[129] Considerable attention was given to these highways in and out of the city. Their proposal accomplished two key objectives of the 1946 plan. At the time of its creation, Merrett recognized this solution to remedy access to high quality building lands, as well as an economic improvement through new industrial and commercial development.[130] Merrett's plan proposed a bypass highway to the north of the city centre and an enabling bridge spanning a high ravine over the Saint John River's reversing falls, though these are expressly stated to be too costly to undertake for quite some time.[131] In the ten years that

128 Ibid. 181-183.
129 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 56-68.
130 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 296.
131 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John,* 56-63.

followed the 1946 plan's creation (and particularly once the Saint Lawrence Seaway had opened), however, this highway became an economic lifeline. Traversing the harbour would be its greatest challenge and this would be accomplished by the construction of the monumental Harbour Bridge.

Urban Renewal Projects in Saint John: A Partial Legacy of Merrett's Plan

The completion of the Saint John Harbour Bridge was realized 23 years after the completion of the 1946 plan. Opened in August of 1969, the bridge combined both of Merrett's major roadway proposals. The bridge functions as both a major east-west highway artery and as a means of traversing the inner harbour. As its construction necessitated the expropriation and demolition of multiple city neighbourhoods (the Portland Valley, the environs of Main Street North, Courtney Bay, and the Lower West Side), the bridge has become a tangible manifestation of certain feelings of loss. Similar programs (with similar legacies) were undertaken in Ottawa at the LeBreton Flats, in Toronto at Cabbagetown, and in Montreal at Little Burgundy.[132] Amendments to the *National Housing Act* made in 1956 enabled the realization of these and other projects across the country.[133] At the time of its completion, the Saint John Harbour Bridge and its adjoining highway acted as a lifeline for the city and the region's industries. The Saint John

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132 Despite the ambitious plans of government agencies, the redevelopment of these and other areas failed to solve social problems. These sacrifices in the name of 'progress' have been the subject of considerable scrutiny for a considerable time. See Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation," in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, Mass./London: The MIT Press, 1966), 359-379. See also Roger M. Picton, "Rubble and Ruin: Walter Benjamin, Post-war Urban Renewal and the Residue of Everyday Life on LeBreton Flats, Ottawa, Canada (1944-1970)," *Urban History* 42, no. 1 (2015): 130-156.

133 David L.A. Gordon argues the CMHC played an active role in the proliferation of suburbs in Canada. This is achieved in part by the expropriation and demolition of so-called city slums. While Gordon addresses only the 1944 National Housing *Act*, the gradual uptake in support for urban renewal projects by the federal government provides significant financial backing for these and other projects. See Georges Potvin "Saint John Urban Renewal Study" and David L.A. Gordon, "Humphrey Carver and the Federal Government's Postwar Revival of Canadian Community Planning," *Urban History Review* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 71-84.

Thru-Way made safe, modern, divided and controlled-access connections with both the Trans-Canada Highway and the New Brunswick Number 1 Highway, which provided shippers a direct link to American markets. On its opening weekend, the equivalent of the entire population of the city traversed the bridge twice.[134] The bridge was opened by special ceremony with Premier Louis Robichaud, the Mayor of Saint John, Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, and various business leaders also in attendance. In the decades since its opening, the bridge has been a fixture in local discourse around urban renewal. Publications like Brenda Peters-McDermott's *Urban Renewal Saint John* memorialized the people displaced and the buildings demolished to facilitate this project. Though hindsight inspired regret and rendered the Harbour Bridge divisive, the bridge remains a powerful symbol of the city's modernization for proponents and critics, alike.

The construction of the Harbour Bridge is the largest single project undertaken during urban renewal. It is a centrepiece in Marquis' examination of the period, "Uneven Renaissance." Marquis notes, "the Merrett report of 1946 had identified the city's ageing, polluted, and crowded built environment as a serious issue."[135] Though not connecting them directly to Merrett's plan, Marquis repeats four key priorities for development in Saint John in the postwar: "slum clearance, transportation infrastructure, industrial-business development, and housing."[136] These priorities are those first articulated in the 1946 plan. Though the plan proposes projects similar to urban renewal, Marquis identifies Georges Potvin's 1956 *Urban Renewal Study* as the first urban renewal document produced for Saint John.[137] Potvin, much like Merrett, conducted a

134 "Toll Bridge Traffic Light" *Evening Times Globe* (Saint John) 110, no. 196 (August 19, 1968): 1.
135 Marquis, "Uneven Renaissance," 94.
136 Ibid. 93.
137 Ibid. 94-95.

study of the city's worst 'blighted areas' but made more specific project recommendations than could be facilitated ten years earlier by Merrett. As Marquis notes:

> Throughout the 1950s, support grew within the municipal government, the media, and the business community for cost-shared urban renewal. Facilitated by an amended *National Housing Act* (NHA), renewal was primarily a strategy for revitalizing CBDs [central business districts] or adjacent neighbourhoods. The three obstacles were land assembly, land costs, and the rehousing of working-class populations. [138]

These revisions to the *National Housing Act* introduced a model of cost-sharing previously unavailable to cities. This opportunity would enable to development of the City's first urban renewal project, Courtney Place (see figures 9, 10, and 11). Marquis suggests that this project benefitted tremendously from the cost-sharing scheme, stating:

> Even critics of urban renewal agreed that conditions in many parts of the East End were intolerable. Because of blight and an irregular street pattern, it was decided to remove 300 buildings and 600 families from the 57-acre site, which was situated in the Prince ward. The cost of land expropriation and slum clearance was shared unevenly among the three levels of government. The federal government covered 50% of land assembly costs and 75% of relocation housing costs. The total cost for the project was $4.5 million. [139]

Further to this substantial funding, Marquis notes that "changes to the *National Housing Act* later permitted the municipality to access federal funds for the installation of municipal services, such as paving, sidewalks, sewers, water, electricity, and lighting."[140] Without significant investment from the federal government, Saint John's urban renewal projects likely would not have come to fruition. Potvin was a nationally prominent consulting professional during the time he spent working in Saint John, much like Merrett had been.[141] He and a successor of Merrett's, Murray Zides, were among 40 participants at a CMHC-sponsored conference in Ottawa in October of

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138 Ibid. 95.

139 Ibid. 95.

140 Ibid. 95.

141 Potvin's study is one of eleven produced in Canada under Section 33(1)(h) of the *National Housing Act* (1956). Potvin's work and other studies are examined at a national conference in Ottawa and Montreal in September of 1959. See Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Urban Renewal Seminar* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1960).

1959. The conference program cited the example of Saint John's Courtney Place urban renewal scheme as the only completed 'Relocation Housing' project. E.A. Levin of the CMHC's architectural and planning division discussed this project at length.[142] Thus, much like the 1946 plan, urban renewal projects in Saint John were early and prominent test cases of new federal programs.

Marquis' conclusion does not support that of Leroux, whose *The Lost City* seeks to identify Merrett's 1946 plan as the catalyst for the city's urban renewal program. Leroux wrote that the plan is responsible for "quarterbacking the city's future development route. A modernist out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new ethos was pervasive and held sway for decades."[143] While Marquis supports the notion that the 1946 plan reproduced these reformist sentiments (as this thesis argues they had been present in the city's planning discourse for many decades prior), Marquis identifies local business and real estate interests as those who drove urban renewal. Further to this, as urban renewal benefitted business and landowners and not tenants, Marquis criticizes developers'' reluctance to construct public housing.[144] Thus, at no point during urban renewal was Merrett's requirement for housing surplus met. Noting Common Council's 1950 refusal of a 500-unit subsequent phase of the Courtney Place development, Marquis concludes: "the business community's chief interest was not in sprucing up Saint John's slum areas, most of which were not located near the CBD, but promoting economic development, downtown enhancement, and real estate values."[145] Thus, the unfortunate outcomes of renewal are seemingly the responsibility of civic leaders and federal policymakers and not, as previously thought, the direct result of the 1946 plan's proposals. Civic initiatives from the period of

142 Ibid. 3, 42-43.
143 Leroux, *The Lost City*, 11.
144 Marquis, "Uneven Renaissance," 100.
145 Ibid. 98.

Merrett's plan's development suggest that the problems of the so-called urban renewal era were already being addressed before and during the war. The development of Rockwood Court by the City's Housing Commission was the first of its kind in Canada and its completion is a testament to the sophistication of Saint John's architectural production in this period.

The Heritage of Planning in Saint John

While the heritage of planning in Saint John extends beyond the creation of the Town Planning Commission, the Commission's formation by Common Council in August of 1914 punctuates New Brunswick's enthusiastic adoption of the relatively new profession, as described by planning historian Michael Simpson.[146] Much of the lobbying that lead to the creation of the Town Planning Commission was led by W.F. Burditt (unknown), an East Saint John landowner and a prominent mouthpiece for the Commission of Conservation.[147] Recognized as one of the key driving forces behind the formalization of professional planning in Canada, the Commission of Conservation was a national land-use-planning advocacy group that spearheaded significant civic reform in Toronto in the early twentieth century.[148] The Saint John Town Planning Commission was founded amidst a public advocacy campaign. At the time, Burditt urged "people of this City to recognize the fact that St. John [sic] will be one of the largest cities in America, and to plan accordingly."[149]

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146 Michael Simpson, *Thomas Adams and the Making of the Modern Planning Movement* (London: Mansell, 1985), 82-87

147 Ibid. 87-90.

148 See Sarah Bassnett, "Visuality and City Planning," in *Picturing Toronto: Photography and the Making of a Modern City* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 50-74 and Simpson, "Canada: The Years of Hope 1906-1914," in *Thomas Adams and the Making of the Modern Planning Movement,* 71-103.

149 *Saint John Daily Telegraph*, (January 10, 1913): 3.

Art historian Sarah Bassnett and planning historian Michael Simpson attribute the formal 'beginning' of town planning in Canada to Thomas Adams. Adams, before he arrived in Canada, was an influential British planner and a leading figure in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century social reform movements. Indeed, the existing literature on the development of planning practice in Canada presents Adams, the Saint John businessman W.F. Burditt, and Clifford Sifton, the long-time Internal Affairs and Immigration Minister in the cabinets of Wilfrid Laurier, as the key figures who helped define the profession.[150] Adams established professional bodies and supporting legislation in several provinces soon after his arrival. Adams' biographer makes key connections between Adams and Saint John, as the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were the first to adopt town planning legislation.[151] In 1917, the City of Saint John—under Adams' direct advisement—adopted a land use plan that formalized modern models of cost-sharing for new municipal infrastructure and proposed the city's first zoning by-law.[152] Though this provincial legislation would undergo many changes between 1917 and the 1940s when Merrett worked in Saint John, it bears noting that this early adoption is significant. In contradiction to Eric Arthur's remarks in the *JRAIC*, regarding the "moribund" planning profession in Canada, the heritage of town planning in Saint John and its clear impact on the citizens and the cultural products of the city suggests much the opposite was true in Saint John. By virtue of the unique and overwhelming support the city demonstrates for the practice of planning during the period Merrett, his practice, and his recommendations benefitted from local support.

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150 Simpson, *Thomas Adams and the Making of the Modern Planning Movement*, 73.To date, no scholar has explored the link between the development of professional planning in this period and Canada's ongoing colonial project.

151 Ibid. 85.

152 See "Saint John Town Planning Scheme, 1922," Collection of the New Brunswick Museum, Saint John. Accessed 10 April, 2020, http://website.nbm-mnb.ca/Transition/english/view.asp?item=1011.

One of Burditt's early successes precipitated a lasting enthusiasm for town planning and manifested in generations of the city's arts community. Burditt gave a series of lectures at public schools and at the Saint John Art Club that began before the inception of the Saint John Town Planning Commission in 1914. According to the Saint John *Daily Telegraph* in January of 1913, the Saint John Art Club organized a special event expressly for Burditt's lecture on growth and town planning.[153] The lecture's summary in the following day's newspaper boldly proclaimed: "Mr. Burditt Urges People of This City to Recognize the Fact That St. John [sic.] Will Be One of the Largest Cities in America, and to Plan Accordingly."[154] This enthusiasm for the promise of the city's future is repeated much later in the century, by the renowned Saint John artist Miller Brittain. Indeed, Brittain apparently depicted a planner as a hero-figure in a sketch for one of his larger murals (this project is detailed in a letter to local potters Erica and Kjeld Deichmann, from the summer of 1945). Supposedly, the planner clutched a document titled 'PLAN FOR IMPROVED HOUSING.'[155] While it is unclear precisely to which mural Brittain's letter refers, his monumental work *The Place of Healing in the Transformation from War to Peace* presents a similar narrative. In the site-specific mural, Brittain paints the rational processes of modern medicine as they shepherd wretched, warring figures into a calm, geometric peace. This peacetime vision even included a modern cityscape in the background (see figure 12). As the cultural and economic metropolis of New Brunswick, certain Saint John circles were deeply invested with the impact of planning on life in the postwar era. Particularly, the connection between the arts and planning communities, first demonstrated by Burditt's lectures, seems to

153 "Makes Important Suggestions for Town Planning Scheme," *Saint John Daily Telegraph*, (January 10, 1913): 1.
154 Ibid. 1.
155 Kirk Niergarth, *The Dignity of Every Human Being*, 23.

have nurtured considerable reciprocity between the groups by the time of Merrett's arrival in the city.

The impact of planning and the resultant public discourse impacted the cultural products of postwar Saint John. The overlapping networks identified in this thesis and the works of Niergarth, Herring, and Merrett, support this hypothesis. Merrett engages the same principles (community revitalization and housing equity, particularly) as Saint John artists. Among them, were the painters Miller Brittain, Ted Campbell, Jack Humphrey, Fred Ross, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Julia Crawford Tilley, Avery Maynard Shaw, and the early Danish-Canadian potters Erica and Kjeld Deichmann.[156] Locating points of contact between these artists and Merrett has proven difficult, though evidence of his friendship with Saint John artists survives in his autobiography and in secondary literature. It is reasonable to suppose these artists had something of a formative influence on Merrett's work in Saint John. In his book *The Dignity of Every Human Being*, Niergarth uses a variety of artistic and archival sources to illustrate the keen interest of social-realist painters with the improvement of living conditions for the disadvantaged of Saint John. Artists in the interwar and the immediate postwar had near-constant contact with urban poverty and demonstrated solidarity, particularly with the city Housing Commission while it sought to improve living conditions and construct modern public housing. Ted Campbell's studio, as a major community hub, fostered grassroots community action, as did the Housing Commission's unassisted construction of Rockwood Court and Merrett's intensive study of the city during the 1946 plan's creation.

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156 See Niergarth, *The Dignity of Every Human Being* and *True Nordic: How Scandinavia Influenced Design in Canada* (London: Black Dog. 2016).

Urban poverty was not only the lived experience of many Saint John artists, but their principal subject matter as well. Their paintings are explored in the works of numerous Canadian art historians, specifically Brian Foss, John Leroux, Karen Herring, and Kirk Niergarth.[157] The physical proximity of these artists' studios to Merrett's office and Merrett's identification of Ted Campbell as one of his few friends in the city, it is likely that Merrett had substantial contact with this group of artists.[158] Merrett included a watercolour by Avery Maynard Shaw in the text of his plan.[159] City Hall and the studios of Ted Campbell and Miller Brittain faced on the same corner, that of Prince William and Princess Streets. Mere blocks south of this administrative and artistic cluster, one would have found the worst of the so-termed slums that each of the aforementioned groups addressed in their respective works. Karen Herring recognizes these community connections in her MA thesis, as she details the efforts of community members to promote arts education as a means of empowering the community.[160] Arts education to Saint John artists meant the establishment of community centres and safe places for children and youth. As Herring explores in her examination of Ted Campbell's studio, these community hubs quickly outgrew their primary role in arts education and would play host to political leaders and other prominent citizens and visitors.[161] As Merrett and the Housing Commission laboured to improve living conditions in the city, they further advocated for community gathering places like monuments, parks, and recreation facilities. Their priorities, in this sense,

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157 See Brian Foss, "Spirituality and Social Consciousness in the Art and Thought of Miller Gore Brittain, c. 1930-146" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 1985) and John Leroux, "The Murals of Fred Ross: A Quest for Relevance" (MA thesis. Concordia University, 2002).

158 John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, Appendix 1, page 1.8, note 72.1.

159 The image depicts the Market Slip coal pocket and is used to illustrate the proliferation of dirt and dereliction in the city's central business district. See John Campbell Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 53.

160 Herring, "Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin," 15-34.

161 Ibid. 98-108.

mirrored that of the city's arts community. This solidarity explains each group's success in the early postwar and the impact of the 1946 plan on many citizens.

Local Solidarity with Merrett's Plan

The 1946 plan proposed improved housing as a key transformation for Saint John in the postwar. The precise meaning of improvement appears, based on the language of the plan, to suggest the replacement of old housing with new housing and the best use of previously undeveloped land. Census data collected in 1941 and supplementary study showed only 11.2% of occupied dwellings were single, detached homes.[162] Further to this, 77.4% of all dwellings in the city were rented.[163] Merrett's plan outlines several public housing projects, proposed as new satellite communities oriented along new road arteries. According to Merrett, these lands remained undeveloped because of their relative inaccessibility from the city's centres of employment.[164] These projects combined the typical social hubs and housing variety expected in modernist plans, with predominantly single, detached houses radiating outward from a denser core with commercial and community facilities.[165] Though none of Merrett's proposed communities are built to his specifications, their proposals informed rapid housing development in the immediate years following the plan's adoption. An examination of the plan's remarks on housing, enhanced by surviving archival documents from Merrett's time as Director, illustrates the challenges of adapting federal housing subsidy programs to the realities of development in Saint John, New Brunswick.

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162 *Saint John Housing Atlas* (Ottawa: Minister of Trade and Commerce, 1946), 1.
163 Ibid. 5.
164 John Campbell Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 31-36.
165 Ibid. 36.

In addition to his work on the plan, Merrett would have overseen daily operations and development approvals. Unlike many municipalities detailed in the *JRAIC* summaries, Saint John—as per Merrett's indication—already made effective use of both zoning and land-use by-laws.[166] Approvals during Merrett's term would have been required for subdivisions and construction projects, including those undertaken by Wartime Housing Limited and the CMHC. Though few documents survive, two particular examples preserved in the records of the Common Clerk of the City of Saint John provide a comparison between desirable and non-desirable developments (both underwritten by the federal government) in the view of the 1946 plan. The example of Dominion Court demonstrates the municipal government's lack of control over the long-term feasibility of the project. The example of Portland Place is much the opposite. The close involvement of the City throughout the processes of land acquisition and subdivision fit closely to the directives of the 1946 plan and resulted in a more efficient neighbourhood. As I have previously speculated, this tension between the plan's priorities and government funding programs could have driven Merrett's return to private practice.

The earlier development is Wartime Housing Limited's Dominion Court (see figure 13). Photographs and maps show the filling of a millpond to facilitate the development (see figures 14 and 15). Its site plan—likely created by a draftsperson with Wartime Housing Limited in Ottawa—clearly lays out a regular pattern of lots on which the small prefabricated homes were constructed. The development included 50 dwellings. In the lower right section, in a list of various approvals from the branches of municipal government, is the signature of 'JCMerrett—' the Planning Director. These approvals were made in July of 1944 and, thus, were made shortly after Merrett's appointment as planning director. Seemingly a formative experience in the

166 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 297.

creation of the 1946 plan, this development drew the ire of both Merrett and the Planning Commission. Merrett's frustration was due to the municipality's inability to direct these federal housing projects to sensible sites, which exacerbated inefficient land use. While neither his plan nor his memoir mention the development explicitly, the vocal opposition of the chair of the Town Planning Commission, John Flood (d. 1978), is recorded in the meeting minutes of the Saint John Housing Commission.[167] Flood indicated his Commission's hesitance to permit the development of the land for residential purposes, stating: "it was reclaimed land and also because he understood It was reserved under the Town Planning and Zoning By-Laws as a 'mercantile' site."[168] Flood's opposition suggests Merrett would have been exposed to general frustrations with the development precipitated well before Merrett's arrival. The membership of the Town Planning Commission advocated for the principles of land-use planning, which highlights the robustness of planning in Saint John well before the postwar scramble. With good reason, the choice of site for Dominion Court was not supported. The low, reclaimed land was within meters of the then-Canadian Pacific Railway's dockside marshalling yard and their grain elevators. Certainly, the site was loud, dusty, and vermin infested, though it did afford an opportunity to build new housing in close proximity to existing neighbourhoods and community infrastructure. I believe Merrett responded to Dominion Court directly in the text of the 1946 plan, stating, "when a construction project is suddenly decided upon there will be a scramble to find land which can be serviced with the least delay and the broad long-term viewpoint [of the plan] will be forgotten. This danger cannot be over emphasized."[169] Where this significant investment by the federal government was so rashly made, one can understand Merrett's frustration. However,

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167 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, July 22, 1943, Minute Book I, Page 197-199, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John.

168 Ibid. 197.

169 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John,* 34-36.

"undesirable" developments did not represent the majority of these CMHC projects in the city. The massive influx of federal monies constituted a short-term solution to the city's housing challenges. That said, the program discouraged the level of density that had developed in the city over time. Its impact on the built environment created new ways of living for thousands of Saint John citizens in a relatively short period of time. It is my opinion that this transformation did not encourage a sustainable solution to the city's housing needs, and that this has resulted in the city's persistent struggle with high servicing costs.

Portland Place was in the earliest stages of its development at the time of the plan's adoption in June of 1945. The plan reproduces a landscape photograph that displays the development's first phases (see figure 16). Portland Place was among the first developments on Campbell Merrett's prized new development lands. It is an example of a desirable development built by federal subsidy. A legal agreement negotiated between the City of Saint John and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in June of 1945, details the sale of the then city-owned lands of these early phases, as well as the federal government's former rifle range to the CMHC.[170] A subdivision plan approved by a successor of Merrett's, Murray Zides, shows the phasing of development gradually, growing to house 250 households (see figure 17). The phasing of the development, as well as its proximity to denser city neighbourhoods meant that, despite the investment Portland Place required in transportation infrastructure and servicing, the development was a sensible and sustainable expansion of these costly services. When one considers the immense displacement of people during so-called urban renewal, however, the relative lack of quality development appears as the failure of government to act on promises and

[170] The City of Saint John, deed number 150631 dated February 23,1951, registered 9:30a.m. February 24, 1951, book 9P1Da, page 458, Saint John County Land Registry, Saint John, New Brunswick. Reproduced in the Files of the Community Planning Office, Saint John.

policies first made in the 1946 plan. Where the 1946 plan explicitly called for the creation of a surplus of housing and economic conditions prevented the development of surplus units, it is reasonable to suggest that this failure began with the subsidies of the *National Housing Act*. Single detached houses were not a cost-efficient solution to Saint John's pressing need for new housing. This problem was exacerbated when urban renewal projects attacked the city's dense urban core without providing relief housing to support displaced persons.

Merrett's specific emphasis on housing demonstrate the sophistication of planning discourse in the city and its close link to earlier generations' efforts to build affordable housing in Saint John.[171] Much as Merrett's exhibition work with the Architectural Research Group of Montreal proposed the redesign of city centres with social welfare as top civic priority, already early in the twentieth century the city of Saint John offered loan programs for contractors and developers to construct new housing.[172] A notable standing example is Demonts Street in west Saint John.[173] When in 1935, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick delegated certain powers respecting the regulation of housing to municipalities, the City of Saint John was the sole participant.[174] Its creation, the Saint John Housing Commission, first met on June 20, 1935.[175] At this first meeting, the commission established a permanent office on Canterbury Street, near City Hall. The Commission was first concerned with the drafting of a by-law that set minimum standards for dwelling units . These standards governed the size of dwellings, the maximum number of occupants to a room, the provision of electric light, storage,

171 See "Mass Meeting Was Held in Fairville," *Saint John Standard* (July 27, 1920): 1.
172 Ibid. 1.
173 See "Saint John: An Industrial City in Transition," New Brunswick Museum, Online Exhibition, 2005, accessed 15 May, 2020, http://website.nbm mnb.ca/Transition/english/index.asp
174 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, December 23, 1942, Minute Book I, Page 130, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John.
175 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, June 24, 1935. Minute Book I, Page 29, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John.

and running water.[176] Soon after their initial formation, a dispute between the City and the Provincial Executive Council emerged over funding and the commission would be temporarily suspended—though not before the Minimum Standards By-Law was adopted.[177]

In May of 1941 the Housing Commission is re-struck. The commission's first priority was the enforcement of the Minimum Standards By-Law, which included public trials for negligent landlords. Simultaneously, the Commission contemplated the design and construction of public housing. A site was chosen adjacent to the city's largest urban park.[178] The land formerly contained the suburban manor house of Henry Gilbert, which was begun in 1822 by the architect Henry Cunningham and was probably demolished sometime near 1928.[179] Though presently surrounded by roads, the development would have been readily accessible to the most built-up portion of Rockwood Park, Lily Lake, a short distance north. A call for tenders was made on June 12, 1942 and the cornerstone was laid on December 3rd of the same year.[180] The Housing Commission begin this landmark development during Merrett's tenure as assistant to the comptroller of construction with the Department of Munitions and Supply in Ottawa. Though it is unlikely that Merrett visited the site himself, his office was keenly involved with the approvals process, as the project diverted labour and materials away from the war effort. The lobbying that permitted such a project, discussed at length at the Housing Commission's

176 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, June 20, 1935. Minute Book I, Page I, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John.

177 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, May 21, 1941. Minute Book I, Page 33, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John.

178 See Appendix G: Rockwood Court

179 Hughes, *Music of the Eye*, 1-5.

180 "Housing Commission Plans Erection of 6 or 8 New Buildings" *Telegraph Journal* (June 12, 1942): 1. When the first phase of the development opens, the Housing Commission threw a banquet for each tenant to permit the election of building representatives and to celebrate the milestone. Development would continue in phases and CMHC money would be acquired by the late 1940s to construct larger towers. The buildings are operated by the city well into the 1960s, but were sold to private interests sometime thereafter.

November 4, 1942 meeting, greatly enhanced the profile of the Rockwood Court development and emphasizes the strong principles of the Commission. As a development that predates not only Regent Park in Toronto and the Habitations Jeanne-Mance in Montreal, but also the *National Housing Act'*s public housing schemes, Rockwood Court was not only the first public housing built in Canada but it was constructed amid wartime supply controls and was entirely funded by the municipality.[181]

The structures are simple two storey blocks of attached dwellings (see figure 18). Faced in brick with stone headers, the buildings are grouped into six units per building. Built in phases, these blocks rest irregularly on crescents, with varied views of the Bay of Fundy as the development extends up the hillside. Now privately owned, the structures have been modified since the time of their construction.[182] However, unlike later CMHC-built structures elsewhere in the city, the blocks at Rockwood Court retain their brick cladding and their ornamented door surrounds. The built fabric suggests very few changes to the architecture of the blocks, with only a handful of upper-storey windows now covered and stuccoed. The development is favourably located adjacent to wilderness parkland and City recreation facilities. At the time of its completion, a steep and winding pedestrian trail to its northeast connected Rockwood Court to the City zoo (see figure 19). Rockwood Court may have been known to Merrett prior to his arrival in the city. Whether true or not, he would later write, bolded, in the text of his plan: "Saint John citizens have the smallest equity in shelter of the 12 metropolitan cities of Canada" and,

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181 The Development of Regent Park begins in 1948 and at the Habitations Jeanne-Mance in 1958. For further information, see "Hoare, John Edward," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, accessed 23 June, 2020, http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/258 and "Histoire de la CHJM" Corporation d'habitation Jeanne-Mance, accessed 23 June, 2020, http://chjm.ca/fr/index.php/a-propos-de-nous/histoire-de-la-chjm.

182 Saint John Common Council approved the sale of the entire development in or around July of 1986.

further to this, "It is not enough that money will be made available by loan to construct new housing, therefore. The housing must be subsidized."[183] Clearly, the development had an impact on Merrett's thinking.

Indeed, the development is a feature Merrett listed in his *JRAIC* plan summary: "The City Housing Commission, with one unaided low-rental development already to its credit, is preparing to attack on one of the worst slum areas."[184] As evidenced by the prior engagement of John Flood by the Housing Commission, these two City commissions appear to have operated efficiently before and after Merrett's time. When the Housing Commission contemplates residential developments in blighted areas in the city centre, Merrett is in attendance at the meeting.[185] At this meeting in September of 1944, the Commission was of the opinion that "the Federal Government is apparently against any form of Government subsidy [for slum clearance] and is insistent on such projects being developed by private enterprise."[186] Clearly frustrated, the Commission and Merrett, alike, committed to acquiring similar plans for housing developments. Merrett offered to enquire with colleagues at the City of Montreal. At this meeting, the Commission resolved that slum clearance and re-housing "be developed as a municipal affair under the jurisdiction of the County Council," cutting out—initially—any involvement of the federal government or the CMHC.[187] The close cooperation of Merrett, combined with his own apparent favour for public housing, suggests solidarity and reciprocity between the two parties. Further, it speaks to the capabilities and the ambition of municipal authorities, despite their stated lack of resources. The 1946 plan, the expansion of Rockwood Court and the later development of

183 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 37.
184 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 296.
185 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, September 5, 1944, Minute Book II, Page 10, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John.
186 Ibid. 10.
187 Ibid. 10.

public housing in the environs of Portland Place is a legacy of this reciprocal influence during a brief period of exceptional leadership in the City.

While Merrett warned of the "temporary cottages" of Wartime Housing Limited, he differentiates these from the later developments that followed the intent of the 1946 plan. Though the developments at Portland Place and Dominion Court appear aesthetically similar, the difference in intent and in provision of land for community, commercial, and recreation spaces draws the distinction between quality and hasty postwar development in Saint John. Portland Place and Dominion Court exemplify each of these, respectively. Merrett's acceptance of Portland Place and his rejection of Dominion Court as 'successful' developments does not hinge on architectural style. In contravention to much of his plan's criticism of Saint John's built environment, each of these developments consisted primarily of a standard, CMHC-designed housing type evocative of a traditional 'cape cod' or otherwise vernacular style. Though these structures would deviate substantially from vernacular building in Saint John, they generally suggest a familiar architecture of horizontal board cladding, pitched roofs, and partial storeys.[188] While the cladding on Portland Place and Dominion Court developments now appears to be a mix of metal, wood, and vinyl, the general pattern of horizontal articulation remains as built in the postwar era. As scholars of Maritime vernacular architectures have argued, modernist design language was slowly and carefully adopted by the Maritimes' architects over a period of many decades.[189] Though they made use of modern materials and conveniences (particularly where

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188 See Saint John Heritage Conservation Office, *Practical Conservation Guidelines: Style*, (Saint John: Government Publication, 2014).

189 John Leroux, "A Tentative Modernism," in *Building New Brunswick* (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2008), 172-247. Prior to Leroux's analysis, Annmarie Adams made similar conclusions regarding the adoption of modern design ideas in the region. See Annmarie Adams, "Picturing Vernacular Architecture: Thaddeus Holownia's Photographs of Irving Gas Stations," *Material History Review* 61 (Spring 2005). 36-42. See also Robert Mellin, *Newfoundland Modern: Architecture in the Smallwood Years*, *1949-1972* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 2011).

heating was concerned), Merrett's so-termed desirable developments were more closely related to traditional forms he considered 'drab' than to the modern designs he would undertake later in his own architectural career.[190]

The distinction between desirable and undesirable federally-backed development initially appears to reflect the obtuseness of the *National Housing Act* as it paid little regard to the well-established and more stable cities of the Maritimes. Placated, in a way, through a standard and comfortable architectural form, Merrett's primary criticisms of placement and land-use efficiency remain valid. The 1946 plan briefly elaborates on the question of desirability. Where the plan proposals (Courtney Bay and Milledgeville in particular) also called for majority single-family detached housing, the plan also provides for the clear and incremental construction of city services and included many more higher density land uses.[191] Though the CMHC supported expansion projects at Rockwood Court in the early 1950s, subsidies for multi-unit developments only appear to have benefitted public housing.[192]As Marquis notes, many citizens held a low opinion of public housing.[193] The effect of a general lack of government support for dense developments was an overwhelming surplus of detached, single family homes. Where, in 1946, only 11.2% of houses in the city were single and detached, the proliferation of this housing type in the postwar constitutes a substantial (and generously subsidized) change to the built environment.[194] The largest (non-infrastructure) intervention into the city's built environment in the twentieth century, then, was the proliferation of detached houses that began with the

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190 The 1946 *Housing Atlas* identified that 76% of all dwellings in the city were heated by stove. Modern central heating systems, as detailed in *Farewell Oak Street*, seem to have been far more desirable. Merrett's firm, Barott, Marshall, Montgomery & Merrett produced several large commissions including McGill University's Burnside Hall and various additions at the Royal Victoria Hospital before his retirement in 1977.

191 Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 39-46.

192 See NRC REPORT

193 Marquis, "Uneven Renaissance," 101.

194 *Housing Atlas*, 1.

generous subsidies of the *National Housing Act* and continued well beyond the urban renewal era. Merrett expressed doubt for the federal programs' encouragement of premature subdivision, and he identified the programs' lack of suitability in Saint John. One cannot discount the cultural impact of this normative preference for single-family, detached housing. In Saint John, as suggests the *Housing Atlas*, this represented a significant departure from established ways of living. The failures of federal programs appear glaring in large part due to the sophistication of planning discourse in the city at the time of Merrett's arrival. The revision of the city's development priorities was catalyzed not by choice, but by crushing economic pressure, as the construction of the Saint John Harbour Bridge demonstrated.

It bears repeating that the formation of the Saint John Town Planning Commission in 1914 is exceptionally early. Similar commissions in St. John's and Halifax are only struck in 1942 and 1943, respectively.[195] Merrett's appointment itself is demonstrative of the impact of the Commission on Canadian planning. Merrett recalled: "I was the first town planner employed full-time by any Canadian municipality."[196] In spite of this, the Commission struggled to acquire adequate research support during the creation of the 1946 plan. Having to produce many of the statistics that supported the plan's development themselves, Merrett states:

> In the Buick car the town supplied me, I did demographic studies and traffic counts; I analyzed school and playground and park facilities; I assessed housing conditions and surveyed industrial and commercial areas and requirements and I prepared charts and graphs and maps, I hired two draughtsmen and a secretary to help.[197]

Working between the spring of 1944 and the plan's adoption in June of 1945, the team of three accomplished an astounding amount of work. Located in a modest and then-dated City Hall on Prince William Street, a photo depicts the planners' working conditions (see figure 20). Posed, as

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195 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 302.
196 John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, Book 11, page 62.
197 Ibid. 62.

if a promotional photo, the three staff of the Planning Commission—Merrett, Jean Walbridge, and Peter Goguen—gather around the commission's drafting tables, examining plans and conversing among pens, bottles of ink and gouache.[198] In the background, the view from the rear window of the room looks on a shared courtyard from the first or second floor. As the building still stands, one can deduce that the Town Planning Commission worked in the back corner of the building without an abundance of natural light.

In spite of the limitations of the City's facilities, Merrett's team produced the plan, an exhibition, numerous public talks, and radio programming to advertise the plan's process and proposals.[199] Though this range of media is not entirely reflected in surviving records, a public advertisement from the Saint John *Telegraph Journal* advertised the plan's exhibition to the general public (see figure 21). The exhibition took place at the Royal Hotel on King Street and began on June 4, 1945. The exhibition ran in anticipation of the Plan's review by Common Council, which would assent to the plan on June 21, 1945.[200] A five-page feature detailing the plan and its proposals was featured in *The* Standard, a weekly illustrated news publication from Montreal, on June 2, 1945 (see figure 22).The plan seemed to have enjoyed tremendous interest and considerable support from the public, which Merrett's remarks in the *JRAIC* confirm:

> Generally the Saint John public is conservative in thought, sceptical of new ideas; yet thanks to a continuous program of publicity, the average citizen to-day knows what town

198 According to his obituary, Peter Goguen was a career employee of the City of Saint John. He spent 32 years with the corporation and many of those with the city's technical services and engineering group. See "Goguen, Peter," *Telegraph Journal* (7 July, 2000): 14. Jean Walbridge was born in Edmonton and educated at the University of Alberta. Her architectural career began with the Planning Commission of the City of Saint John. She and Mary Imrie, in 1950, began Canada's first architectural partnership between two women. See: Ipek Mehmetoğlu, "Les Girls en voyage," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 44, no. 1 (2019): 7-20, Annmarie Adams and Petra Tancred, '*Designing Women,' Gender and the Architectural Profession* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2000), Joan Grierson *For The Record: The First Women in Canadian Architecture* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), and Ema Dominey, "Wallbridge and Imrie: The Architectural Practice of Two Edmonton Women, 1950-1979," *Bulletin (Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada)* 17, no. 1 (1992): 12-18.

199 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 296.

200 *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 23, no. 11 (1946): 167.

> planning is about, and public reaction has been most encouraging. An exhibition of survey data and plan proposals held just before the plan was presented to Council was visited by a tenth of the city's population and developed much valuable comment. Objections certainly arise, chiefly to interference with private rights or on the vague broader ground of overall cost. But it is now apparent that most of the people, informed through lectures, radio and a supporting press, realize that town planning is one of the requirements if their old city is to overcome its difficulties and pick up step with the rest of post-war Canada.[201]

Indeed, as director of the Town Planning Commission, Merrett provided citizens of the city and the Province with lectures. He also invited former colleagues from the University of London to do the same.[202] On May 11, 1945—just three days after VE Day—the noted British town planning pioneer Jacqueline Tyrwhitt lectured in Saint John on invitation from Campbell Merrett.[203] Remaining in the city for two days following her lecture, she spent time contemplating the challenges Saint John presented to Merrett and his Commission.[204] She lectured on the nature of town planning, stating it to be "something which grows out of the needs of the people."[205] The key points of her discussion (roadway modernization, the importance of community infrastructure, and mixed neighbourhoods) are the same as priorities identified in Merrett's plan.[206] However, these priorities would change significantly during urban renewal. Merrett's efforts mirror Burditt's earlier attempts to undertake public campaigns and to give numerous lectures. These efforts laid the groundwork for an articulate, educated and optimistic public. For this reason, as well as civic leaders' affinity for planning, the Saint John presents a

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201 Ibid. 298.

202 John Campbell Merrett Autobiography, Book 11, page 62.

203 Housing Commission of the City of Saint John Meeting Minutes, May 7, 1945, Minute Book II, Page 39, Collection of the Common Clerk, Saint John. On the life and career of Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, see Ellen Shoshkes, *Jaqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life in Urban Planning and Design* (London: Routledge, 2013). For her tenure at the University of Toronto, see Michael Darroch, "Bridging Urban and Media Studies: Jacqueline Tyrwhitt and the *Explorations* Group, 1951-1957," *Canadian Journal of Communication 33* (2008):147-169.

204 "Outlines System of Town Planning Used in England," *Telegraph Journal* (May 12, 1945): 1.

205 Ibid. 1.

206 Ibid. 1.

striking testament to popular interest in planning as a discipline. I argue the 1946 plan's rational solutions to the challenges of the city's context, as well as the pressures of a changing economy are the most important facets of its legacy.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Saint John's 1946 Plan

The city's early victories over substandard housing conditions, by any logic, should stand as monuments to its successful 'modernization.' Rockwood Court's early development meant that by 1949 expansion was already underway—this time with federal subsidy. [207] So too should Portland Place and Courtney Place stand as reminders of the benefits of collective effort and community care. Yet this is not the case, in my opinion. The legacy of urban renewal remains monolithic. As a prerequisite for funding and as a tool to manage growth, the 1946 plan provided tremendous benefit, without which the city would not have acquired capital through the *National Housing Act* . The fact that Merrett's plan and other City projects are outliers among their peers in a national context further demonstrates the benefit the 1946 plan provided to the city. A high volume of unexplored archival material means Saint John's planning heritage is a rich resource for scholars. This material may yet provide an explanation for the failures of urban renewal and includes surviving maps and working documents, correspondence and appeals, and a complete record of Town Planning Commission meetings from 1943 to the present day. Saint John is a compelling opportunity to broaden the regional scope of Canadian architectural history. The city's faith in new planning practices would drive its radical transformation through the remainder of the 20th century. Though postwar developers could not realize the collective dream of safe and plentiful housing, their efforts have left monuments of infrastructure for the present

[207] "Sketch of New Buildings at Court," *Telegraph Journal* (January 30, 1948): 1.

generation.[208] Present-day authors have yet to reconcile the benefits of urban renewal with serious problems of representation and integrity during its design and execution.

As the spectre of Merrett's plan looms large over these later developments, several pressing questions may better illustrate urban renewal's departure from the intent of the 1946 plan. As the Saint John Housing Commission suffered the limitations of federal policies, how did later investment in Rockwood Court complicate the Commission's vision for the site? How abrupt a response is the Saint John Harbour Bridge to the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway? How did the wider public engage in urban renewal discourse, as Eric Arthur desired in 1946? Does the production of National Film Board features such as *Farewell Oak Street* dramatically change professional discourse? How does the centralized administration of *National Housing Act* programs impact municipalities that did not experience the explosive growth of Central and Western Canadian cities?

Though it is clear that further work will be needed, the 1946 plan formed the backbone of the city's transition to the postwar. Without this plan, as has been demonstrated throughout my thesis, the city would have scrambled for the out-of-province capital offered by the *National Housing Act* and the regulatory controls required to curtail the excessive expense of urban sprawl. The 1946 plan proposals, both published and unpublished, created space in the local discourse for iterative changes of the city's built environment, without urban renewal's insistence on widespread razing. While the city's economy suffered from the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, the plan's response to the needs of modern highways meant the quick reorientation of economic production away from the port and towards road-based transport. Though not ideally implemented, *National Housing Act* money created new neighbourhoods;

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[208] See Marquis, "Uneven Renaissance," 104 and Leroux, *The Lost City*, 9-10.

among them Dominion Court on the west side, Portland Place, and an expanded Rockwood Court in the city's north end. The considerations made for recreation, shopping, and community facilities—per Merrett's plan's insistence—increased the capacity of the old city to respond quickly to a rapid transformation of postwar life. The CMHC and the *National Housing Act* underwrote the immensely expensive modernization of the city's built environment. The remarkable case of Saint John demonstrates this transformation, that many cities in Canada underwent, in a relatively short time. Where these initiatives maintained long-standing power structures, they failed to address social problems that, in my opinion, have persisted to the present day. Furthermore, the generation of wealth in the city persisted—though so too did its concentration. This is in part the result of the system's preference for detached, single dwellings. In doing so, the built environment failed to manifest one of Merrett's key design points: the neighbourhood unit which "should cut across income levels and provide housing types for more than one group of the population."[209] Rather, the development of these tracts of housing favoured a predominantly white, settler middle class. This and other iterative transformations of the 1946 plan's proposals and objectives uprooted housing equity. These iterative changes, I believe, distance the 1946 plan from urban renewal. The process and the individuals engaged in the creation, the exhibition, and the adoption of the 1946 plan demonstrate its importance as a treatise of Canadian architecture and urban design and as a locally significant planning milestone. Merrett himself is but one author of the document. Previously unknown in local and national literature, the influence of the Saint John Town Planning Commission and of the Saint John Housing Commission reshapes our understanding of Merrett's work and highlights the sophistication of the region and its design practices.

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[209] Merrett, *Master Plan of the City and County of Saint John*, 10.

As the wounds of so-called urban renewal remain fresh, it is important to study the individuals and the institutions responsible for its ravages. Though Jane Jacobs so decisively declared in 1961, "From beginning to end, from Howard and Burnham to the latest amendment on urban-renewal law, the entire concoction is irrelevant to the workings of cities. Unstudied, unrespected, cities have served as sacrificial victims."[210] Merrett's 1946 plan challenges Canadian scholars' monolithic view of postwar urban redevelopment. The 1946 plan remains a proximate but distinct paradigm in a series of attempts to adapt settler communities to the rapid changes of the postwar. The 1946 plan draws on a different *Zeitgeist*—relying on collectivism and optimism. The infrastructure and the housing developments that 1940s and early 1950s have left behind are a substantial contribution to the architectural heritage of New Brunswick. Urban renewal began in Saint John a full decade following Merrett's departure. The plan represents an instance in which Saint John had considerable influence over the creation of distinctly Canadian architecture. The mid-century pronouncements of the Town Planning Commission of Metropolitan Saint John, with Merrett at its head are a reminder of the complexity and the opportunity afforded by this city. The 1946 plan rejected the geographical biases of Canadian cultural production. It remains the task of historians and community members to uncover and to celebrate the uniqueness of this place and the opportunity it provides for a new and constructive view on the land and its many peoples.

[210] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 25.

Figure 1 - Author Photo. Block of Apartments at 206 Germain Street, Saint John, New Brunswick. Digital Image. 2018.

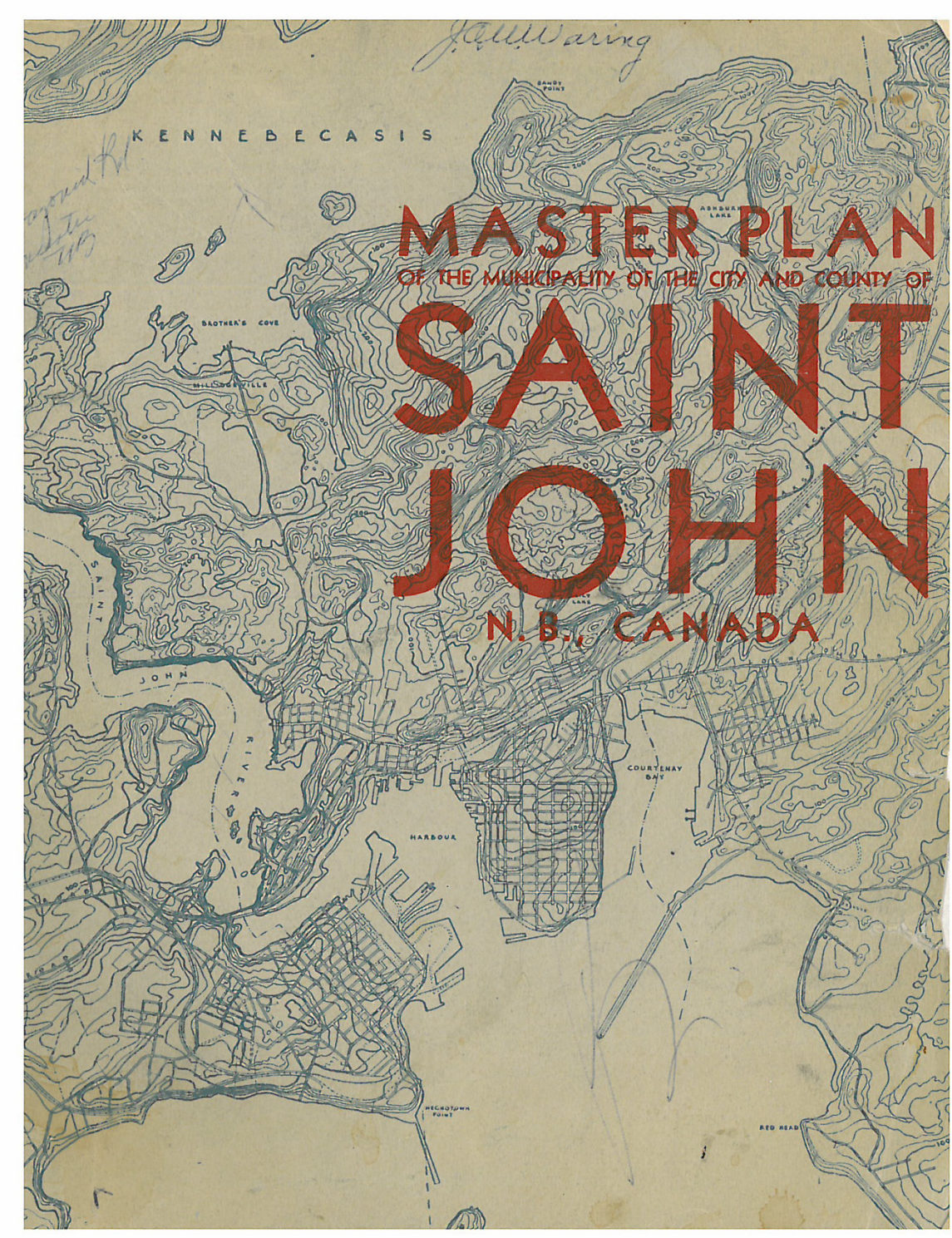

Figure 2 - John Campbell Merrett. Segments of the 1946 Plan. Digitally reproduced from the original. Approximately 9 by 12 inches. Collection of the Community Planning Office, City of Saint John, Saint John, New Brunswick.

38 A PLAN FOR SAINT JOHN

stitutes good design and good planning. There is an extremely limited appreciation of good architecture in this city, not unexpected in view of the general standard of building design and planning. At the same time the modest character of the majority of buildings should make it easier to introduce the clean and simple planning and appearance of the best contemporary architecture than would be the case in a city possessing more pretentious houses, with their over-ambitious, untasteful, and costly plans and elevations. Modern housing is the only logical way to attempt to meet the housing problem. Good architecture — which means good planning and good structural design as well as pleasing exteriors — is as important to the mental welfare of the people as are sun, space and greenery. Beautiful residential buildings, because of the predominance of dwellings in any community, do more for the overall appearance of it and for the impression it makes on the visitor, than do beautiful public and commercial buildings.

In the case of single and two-family houses, individual planning to meet site conditions is of utmost importance in a district with so few level or even near-level sites. The tendency to select a house plan from a catalogue and then attempt to fit it onto a site is likely, in 99 cases out of 100, to result not only in ugliness, but in considerable unnecessary expense. Without attempting to promote "modern" house design for its own sake, it cannot be denied that conventional plans and elevations can rarely make best use of an irregular lot, and even where the site is flat, questions of orientation, view and optimum use of the rear of the lot will often demand special consideration in the house plan. The public must abandon the notion, for instance, that the living room should be on the street side of the house and the kitchen on the rear. Frequently, especially when the lot is on the south or west side of the street, there are obvious advantages in reversing the

Part of the new Multiple Housing Development built and operated by the City at Rockwood Court.

Part of the new Housing Enterprise Development at Fundy Heights.

NEW LIFE FOR CANADA'S OLDEST CITY 39

positions. Similarly on sites sloping down from a street, considerable building "cube" can be saved by placing bedrooms downstairs instead of up from the entrance floor. With modern heating equipment and good planning basements are often unnecessary, and thus expense can be avoided in excavating rocky sites, so numerous in the Saint John area. Again, there is no valid reason for placing garages at the rear of a lot, where they cut up available garden space and necessitate long driveways, especially if the house is planned with its service areas toward the street; and it is recommended that consideration be given to modifying the zoning regulations to permit a garage within a few feet of the street line when site conditions warrant.

Altogether, building sites in and around Saint John are strong arguments in favour of an unconventional approach to house design, with efficient functioning and adaptation to land restrictions as the basis, rather than preconceived ideas of exterior appearance or the thoughtless use of stock or standard types. This is another argument for a public architectural clinic service, already recommended to the Common Council and with sound guidance private house building would go far toward more efficient use of land and economy in construction, as well as more aesthetically pleasing domestic buildings. **With so much new housing ahead, Saint John has the opportunity of changing the dominant character of its residential areas from one of drab ugliness which depresses the visitor consciously and the native subconsciously, to one of architectural quality.** There is no question that such an improvement would result in a mental lift for the residents of the city and a favourable impact on the stranger. Nor is there much doubt that real estate values generally would benefit and that insurance and building loan companies would take a kindlier view of the Saint John market.

Figure 2 - John Campbell Merrett. Segments of the 1946 Plan. Digitally reproduced from the original. Approximately 9 by 12 inches. Collection of the Community Planning Office, City of Saint John, Saint John, New Brunswick.

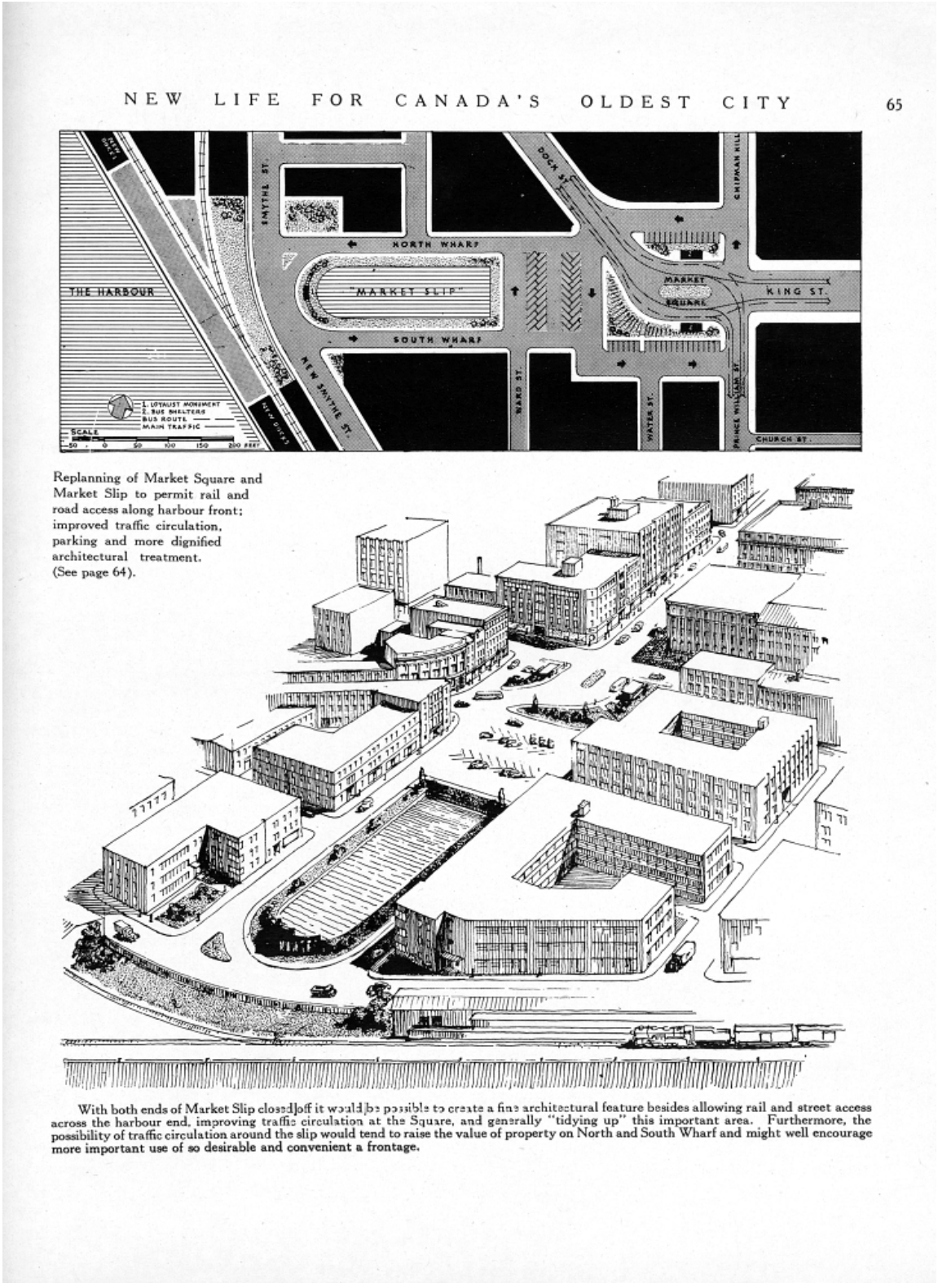

Figure 3 – Saint John Town Planning Commission. Rendering of Market Square Redevelopment, Saint John. Reproduced from original and published in the *Master Plan for the City and County of Saint John*, 1946.

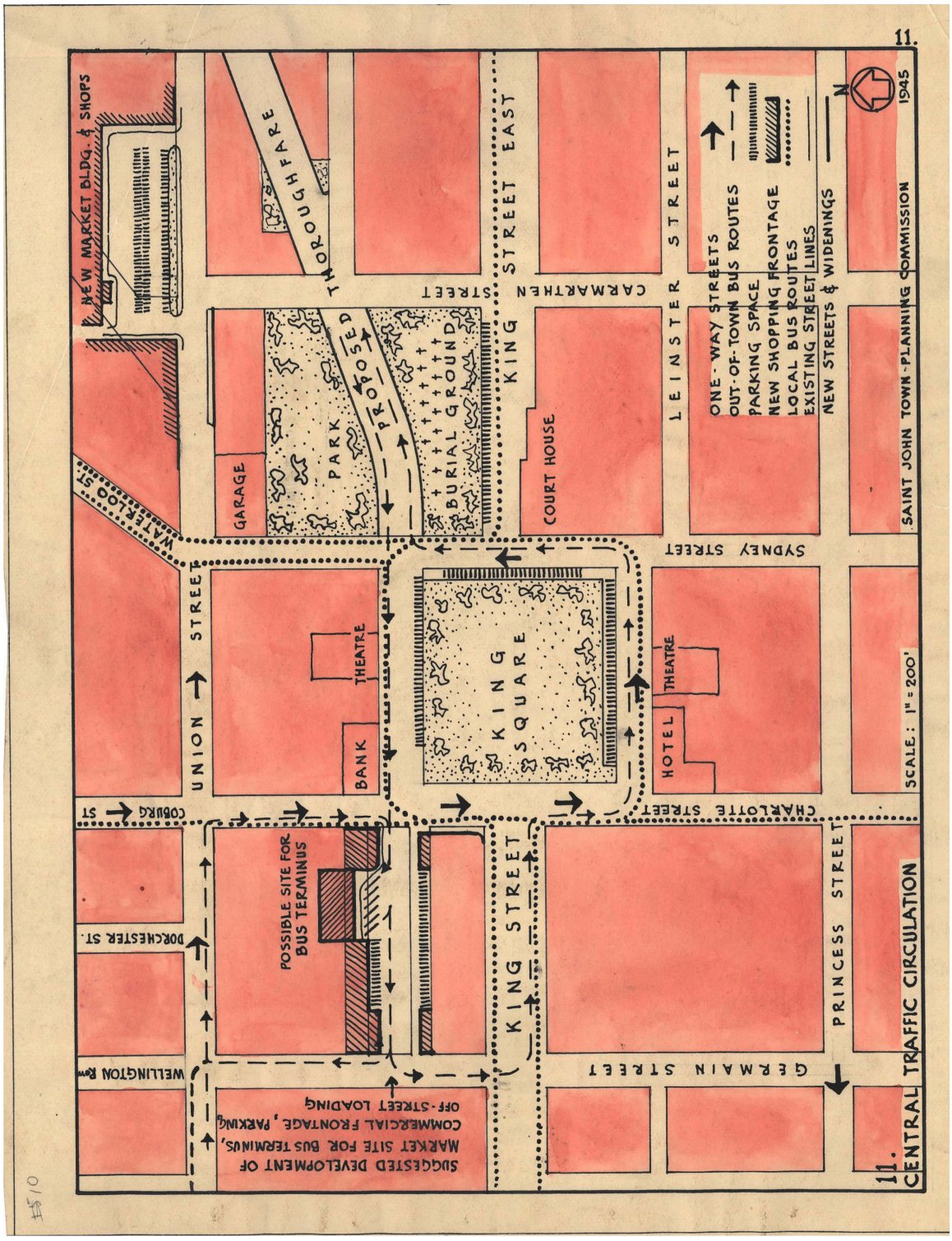

Figure 4 – Saint John Town Planning Commission, *11. Central Traffic Circulation*, Map. Ink and ink wash on waxed paper. Approximately 8 by 10 inches. 1945. Collection of the Community Planning Office, City of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Figure 5 – Captain Robert Campbell and Samuel John Neele. *A map of the great river St. John & waters (the first ever published) from the Bay of Fundy, up to St. Anns or Frederick's Town; being little known by white people, until 1783; settled by the American Loyalists, then part of Nova Scotia, now called New Brunswick from an actual survey, made in the years 1784, 85, 86 and 87*. Map. Approximately 51 by 42 cm. 1987. Collection of the Library of Congress. G3732.S3 1787.C3

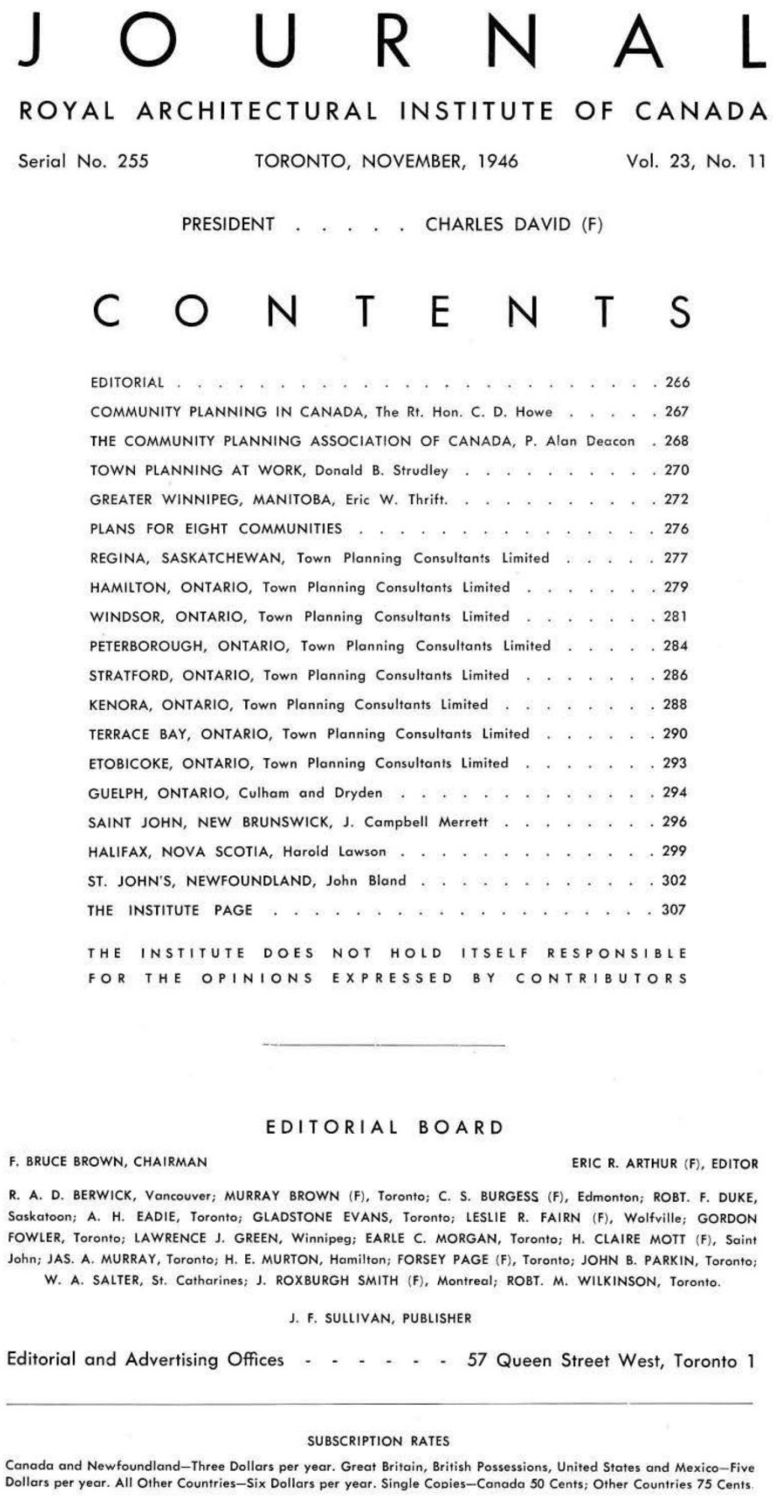

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Figure 6 – Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. A selection of pages from the November, 1946 Town Planning Special Issue. 1946. Digitally reproduced from the original. Collection of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK

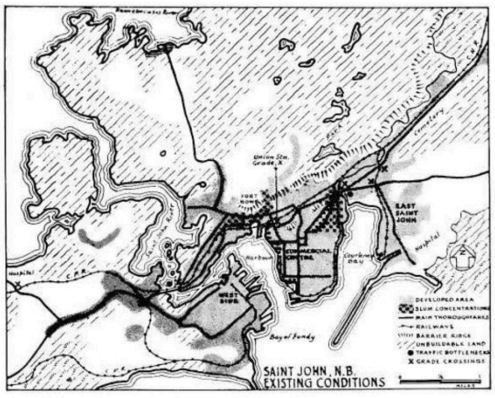
By J. CAMPBELL MERRETT

Problems and Proposals:

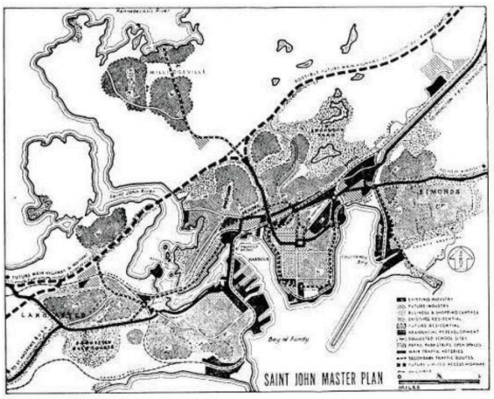
The first incorporated city in Canada, Saint John presents planning problems different from those of younger, more rapidly expanding cities. While the principles of planning hold good, not all the commonly prescribed processes are applicable. Obstacles of unkind topography; the maze of long-established, badly entangled land use; the lack of worthy architecture and of a civic focal point combine to frustrate the planner. He finds little opportunity to apply standard techniques; no nucleus on which to hinge a pattern of redevelopment; nor any single dominating motive as a common denominator of the city's many physical problems.

Saint John once prospered as one of the world's leading shipbuilding centres. When the wooden clipper was retired, however, prosperity waned and population dropped to climb again slowly and spasmodically to the present 75,000. To-day, as the commercial, industrial and cultural metropolis of New Brunswick, the 15th "greater city" of the Dominion and its busiest Atlantic winter port, the city's main employment base is shipping, though it has probably the most healthily diverse industrial development in the Maritimes. To an architect the city is depressing in its drabness and lack of order; its spreading slums and poverty-stricken fringe developments; its feeble indications of civic pride and embellishment. The disproportionate obsolescence of the developed areas and the natural beauties of the city's site conjure up visions of a new city – modern stores, factories and dwellings to replace the solemn dirty old brick or wood facades; of a new plan to utilise to advantage the irregular terrain, instead of the senseless grid of streets awkwardly and expensively imposed upon rugged hills and valleys – a dream to inspire slick birds-eyes of tomorrow's city. But to be practical a plan must be capable of planned achievement. Saint John is even less attuned to visionary theories than the average city.

Sea and river, and the extreme irregularity of the city's site have caused a triple development. Two attenuated connecting necks carry the only thoroughfare, with half a dozen grade crossings and two bottleneck bridges, that is available for local inter-communication and outside arterial traffic alike. Until now a steep rocky ridge has obstructed access northward to potential residential sites overlooking lovely river waters some three miles from the city centre. So scarce were good building sites central enough for horse and buggy days that to-day half of the worst slums occupy land which must be considered unsuitable for residential redevelopment, due either to the nature of the ground or to their location relative to industry, railways or port. Industrial land use, proportionately high, extends around most of the developed waterfront and along the only possible railway route running east and west from the low valley near the city centre. Within these unalterable natural and economic limitations residential development is confined, with schools generally well enough located, but obsolete and with grossly inadequate recreation facilities.



The Problems: Difficult topography, tortuous communications, obsolete overcrowded housing.



The Solutions: Direct access, redistribution, new neighbourhoods.

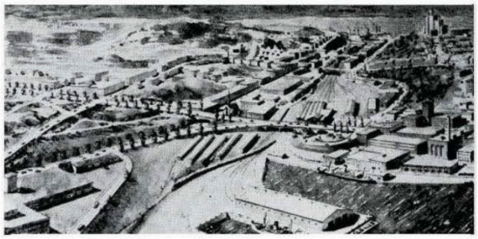
Figure 6 – Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. A selection of pages from the November, 1946 Town Planning Special Issue. 1946. Digitally reproduced from the original. Collection of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

property in one of the major commercial blocks to provide rear access for off-street loading, and for services and fire-fighting. Through its Parks Commission the city has also implemented several plan proposals for parks, playgrounds and sports fields. Already various streets have been closed off, others extended, and new ones constructed to comply with the overall plan.

A housing emergency must always conflict with city planning schemes, however. The place to rehouse slum-dwellers is near their employment; the kind of dwellings to give them is usually flats; the time to clear slums is when there is an abundance of dwellings. One trouble in Saint John, with its scarcity of good building land, is that not enough of the available land was acquired and developed in time to direct the emergency housing projects to sites of the city's choosing; with the result that to-day the character of two of the best residential sites, newly developed, is blighted architecturally and economically by the rash of emergency cottages. The greatest danger to the overall plan is that the desire for private lots, which could have been provided on these city-developed sites, according to plan, will encourage owners of land beyond the logical planned development limits to subdivide prematurely, bringing pressure to bear to have their plans approved.

Generally the Saint John public is conservative in thought, skeptical of new ideas; yet thanks to a continuous programme of publicity, the average citizen to-day knows what town planning is about, and public reaction has been most encouraging. An exhibition of survey data and plan proposals held just before the plan was presented to Council was visited by a tenth of the city population, and developed much valuable comment. Objections certainly arise, chiefly to interference with private rights or on the vague broader grounds of overall cost. But it is now apparent that most of the people, informed through lectures, radio and a supporting press, realize that town planning is one of the requirements if their old city is to overcome its difficulties and pick up step with the rest of post-war Canada. It is a critical period for Saint John: service men returning from other parts of the Dominion and overseas find their hometown drab and backward by contrast; tourists, great potential source of wealth, are repelled by the city's ugly disorder amid its lovely surroundings. New industries are already coming to the city; new commercial enterprises are acquiring land and the old merchandising firms are preparing to rebuild or enlarge. To have a planning scheme launched and operating at such a time is a great asset, and the City Council, the boards of trade, and service clubs, and the forward-looking business and professional men know it and are supporting the Town Planning Commission, on which most of them are represented.

Beyond what planning control and the City can do through planned green spaces and general civic embellishment, improvement in the city's appearance is in the hands of its people and its architects. On the one hand education is necessary to instill a degree of civic pride and responsibility and an appreciation of good taste in building. On the other hand, commercial and industrial redevelopment and expansion, new housing projects and private homes, the extensive school building programme and various other public projects, offer the architects a great opportunity and challenge to raise the architectural quality of the city and thus in turn develop citizen pride and visitor admiration. Let the new buildings be new in spirit and expression, copying neither the past nor the pseudo-modern, and Saint John will regain the character of a vigorous city.



Aerial view of the central valley, showing proposed viaduct, traffic separation, northern access road. Left centre is Fort Howe Park extended downhill to replace a slum.

Market Slip, site of the Loyalists' landing, which it is proposed to redevelop for traffic circulation and architectural features.

Figure 6– Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. A selection of pages from the November, 1946 Town Planning Special Issue. 1946. Digitally reproduced from the original. Collection of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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PLANS FOR MAKING CITY BEAUTIFUL

W. F. Burditt Entertains Art Club with Lecture on Art in Relation to Town Planning.

At the regular meeting of the St. John Art Club last evenig a lecture on art and its relation to town planning was given by W. F. Burditt. W. Brodie presided and a large number of members heard the lecture with pleasure.

The lecture proved of unusual interest. The subject was a congenial one for the lecturer, as he has given the matter of town planning much

Figure 7 - Saint John Standard. “Plans for Making City Beautiful.” January 10, 1913. Digitally reproduced from the original. Archives of *Brunswick News Limited*, Saint John, New Brunswick.

BEAUTIFICATION PLANS FOR CITY FURTHER ADVANCED

Officers For Committee Selected at Meeting in Board of Trade

Harold W. Rising was elected chairman of the Saint John and Suburbs Beautification Committee at a meeting of the general executive held last evening in the Board of Trade rooms. Plans were forwarded for the district beautification scheme and it was decided to have the representatives already named in each ward to call meetings for Monday night next to perfect ward organization, and to report back to the general executive at their meeting to be held on May 9.

Other officers elected were vice-president, John N. Flood, and secretary, T. E. Simpson. The general executive will comprise the officers, the chairman and secretaries of the ward committees, yet to be appointed at the ward meetings, and the following additional members: Commissioner LeBaron Wilson, representing the City of Saint John; Commissioner R. W. Wigmore, representing the Board of Health; J. G. Harrison, representing the wholesalers; Raymond Dill, representing the manufacturers; F. M. Slanders,

Figure 8 - Telegraph Journal. "Beautification Plans for City Further Advanced." May 1, 1930. Digitally reproduced from the original. Archives of *Brunswick News Limited*, Saint John, New Brunswick.

Figure 9 - Saint John Urban Renewal Commission. “Saint John Urban Redevelopment: Project ‘A.’” Pamphlet. Approximately 4.5 by 7 inches. 1959. Collection of the Author.

Figure 10 - City of Saint John Urban Renewal Commission. View of Completed Courtney Place Development. Reproduced in Brenda Peters-McDermott, *Urban Renewal Saint John: A City Transformed*. 142.

Figure 11 - City of Saint John Urban Renewal Commission. View of Completed Courtney Place Court with Saint John General Hospital Nurses' Residence Visible in the Background. Reproduced in Brenda Peters-McDermott, *Urban Renewal Saint John: A City Transformed*. 151.

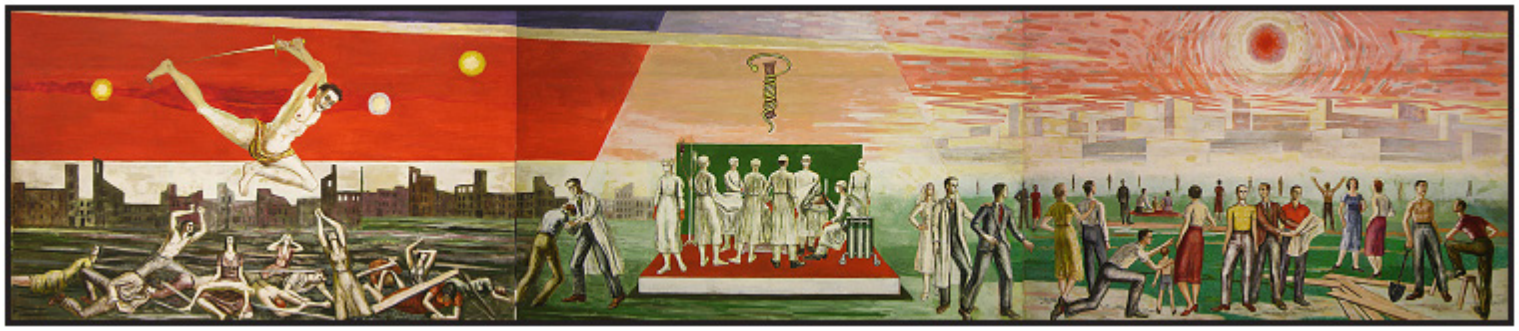


Figure 12 - Miller Brittain, *The Place of Healing in the Transformation from War to Peace*, 1949-1954. Tempera on Masonite. 156 x 729 cm. Collection of the Horizon Health Network, Saint John.

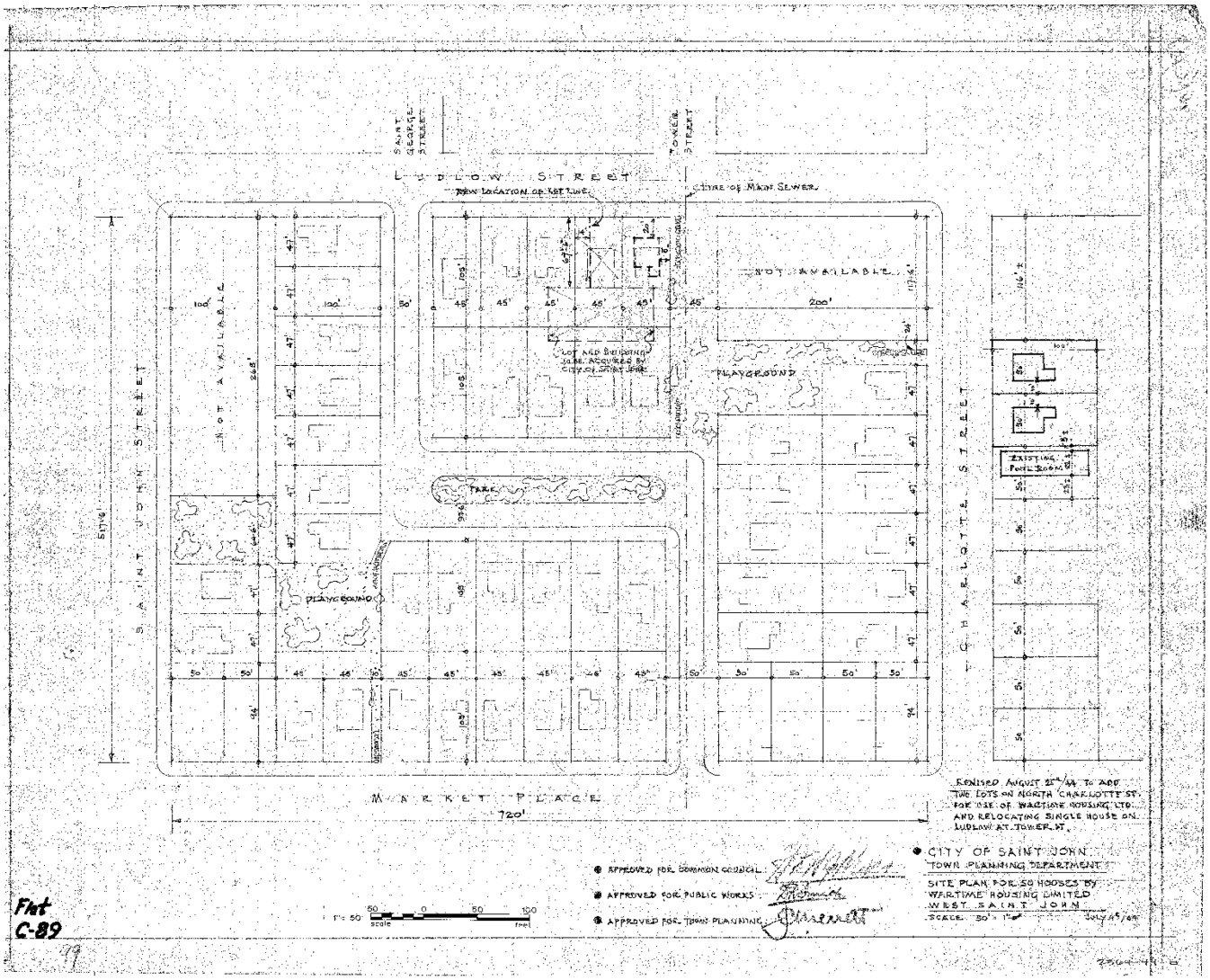


Figure 13 - City of Saint John Town Planning Department. *Site Plan for 50 Houses by Wartime Housing Limited West Saint John.* Graphite on drafting paper. Approximately 18 by 40 inches. Digitally reproduced from the original. Archives of the Community Planning Office, City of Saint John, Saint John, New Brunswick. 2364-44-0.

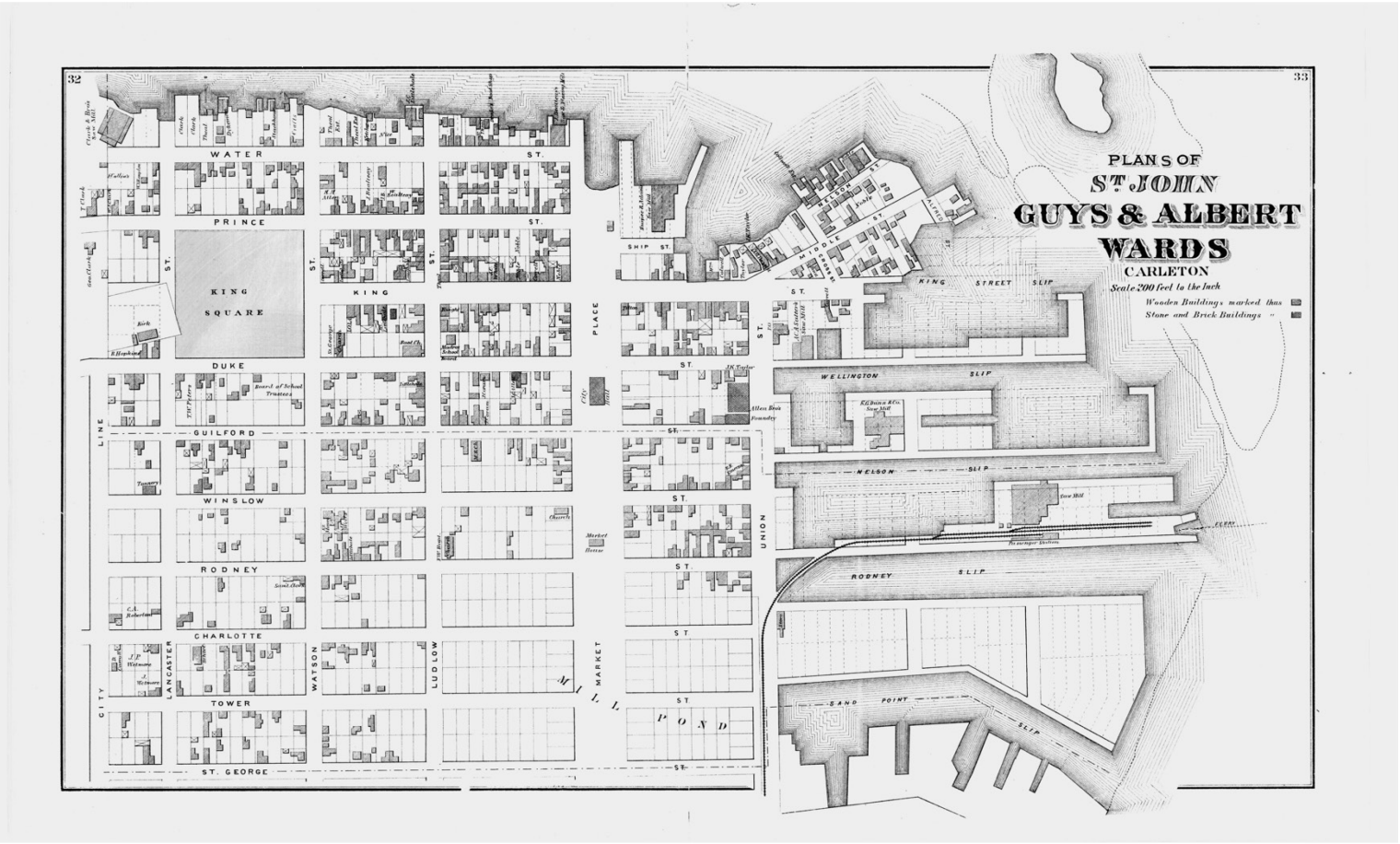


Figure 14 - F.B. Roe and N. George Colby. *Plans of St. John Guys & Albert Wards*. Engraving on paper. Dimensions Unknown. 1875. Digitally reproduced from the original. Archives of the Geographic Information Systems Branch, City of Saint John, Saint John, New Brunswick.

Figure 15 - National Air Photo Library. No title. Dominion Court is not yet complete and is visible at centre. Monochrome air photo. Silver gelatine print on photographic paper. Dimensions unknown. 1945. Digitally reproduced from the original. Archives of the Geographic Information Systems Branch, City of Saint John, Saint John, New Brunswick.

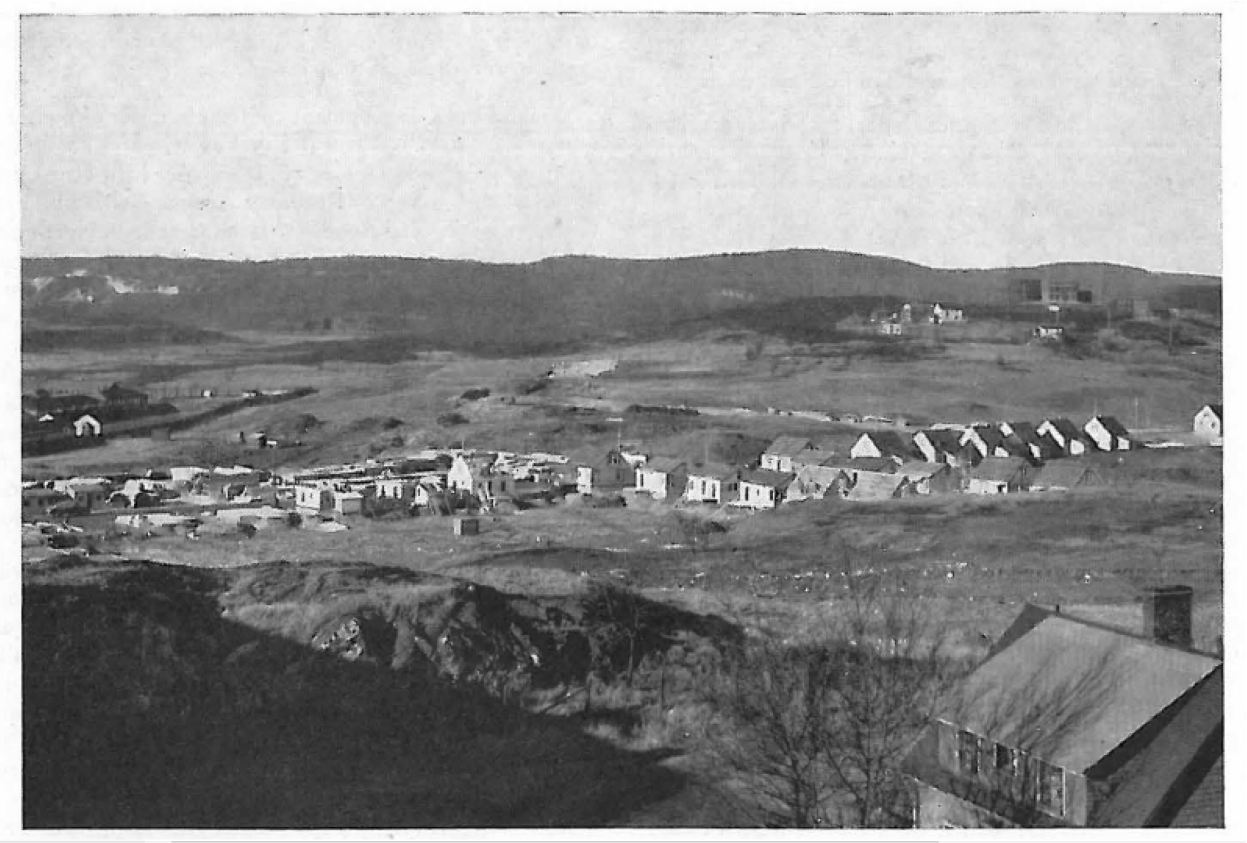


Figure 16 - John Campbell Merrett. Portland Place viewed from Metcalf Street. Reproduced in the *Master Plan for the City and County of Saint John*. 1946. 34.

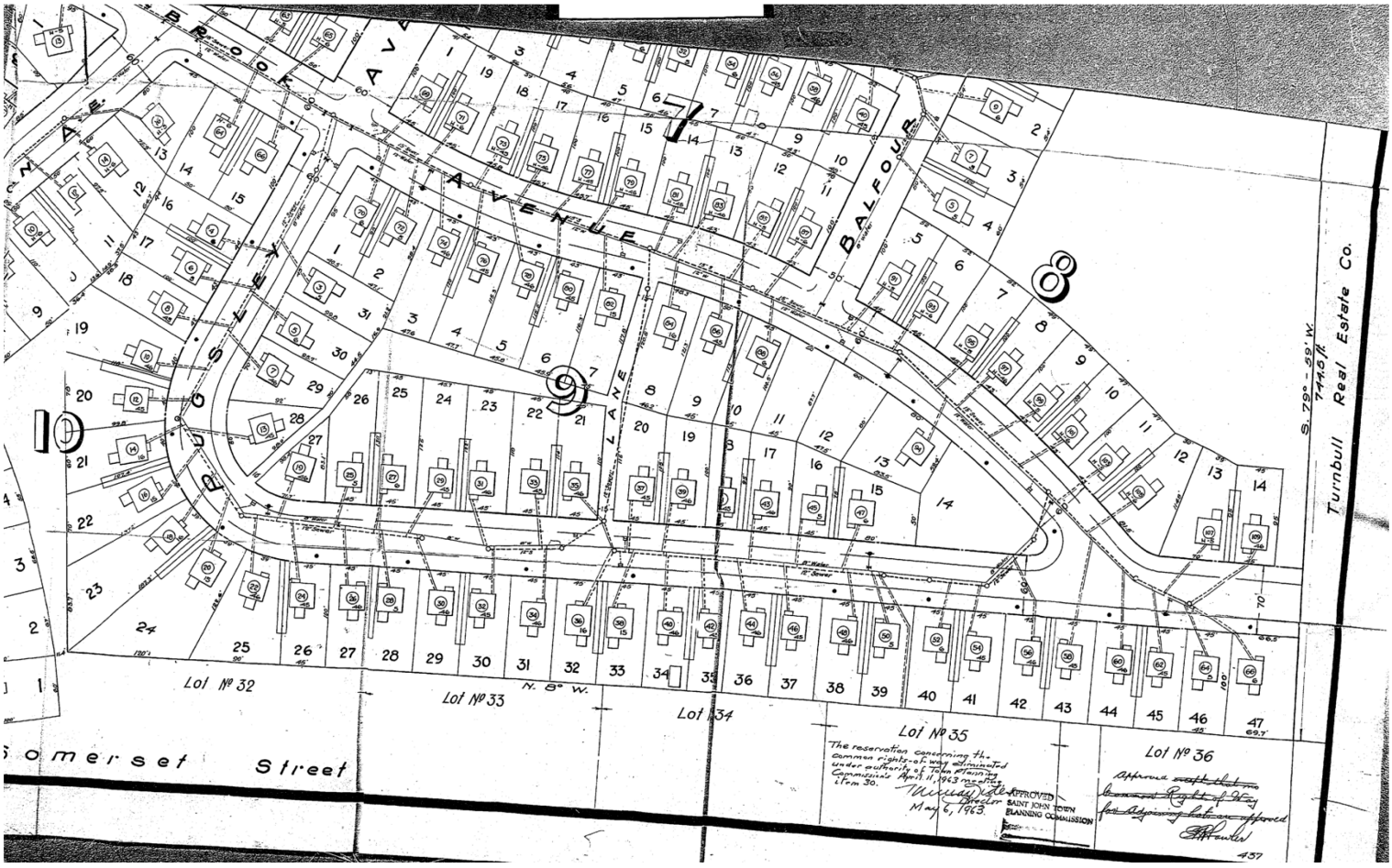


Figure 17 - Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Partial Plan of Portland Place Property Situate in The City of Saint John N.B. Ink on drafting paper. Dimensions Unknown. 1950. Digitally reproduced from microfilm. Archives of the Community Planning Office, City of Saint John, Saint John, New Brunswick. 437.

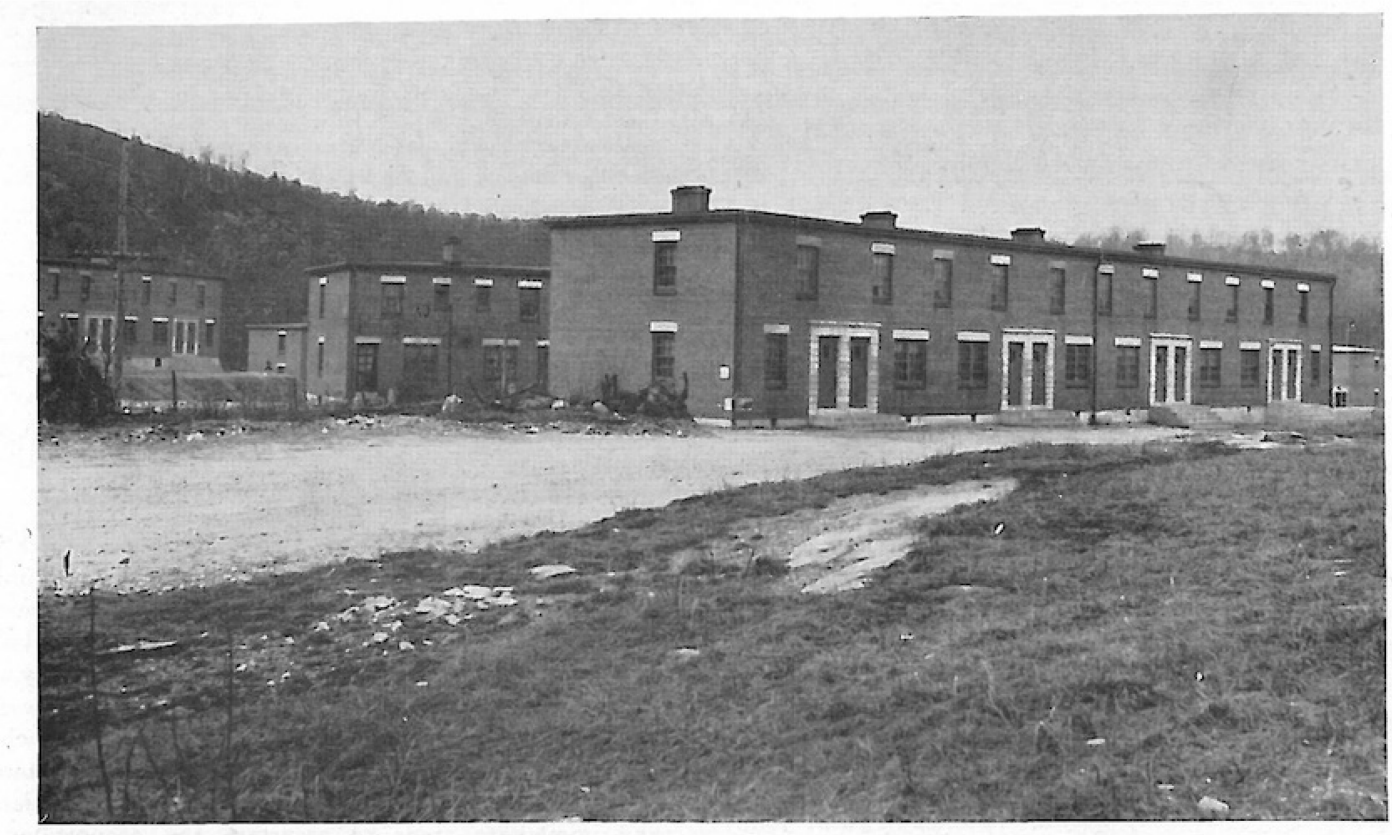
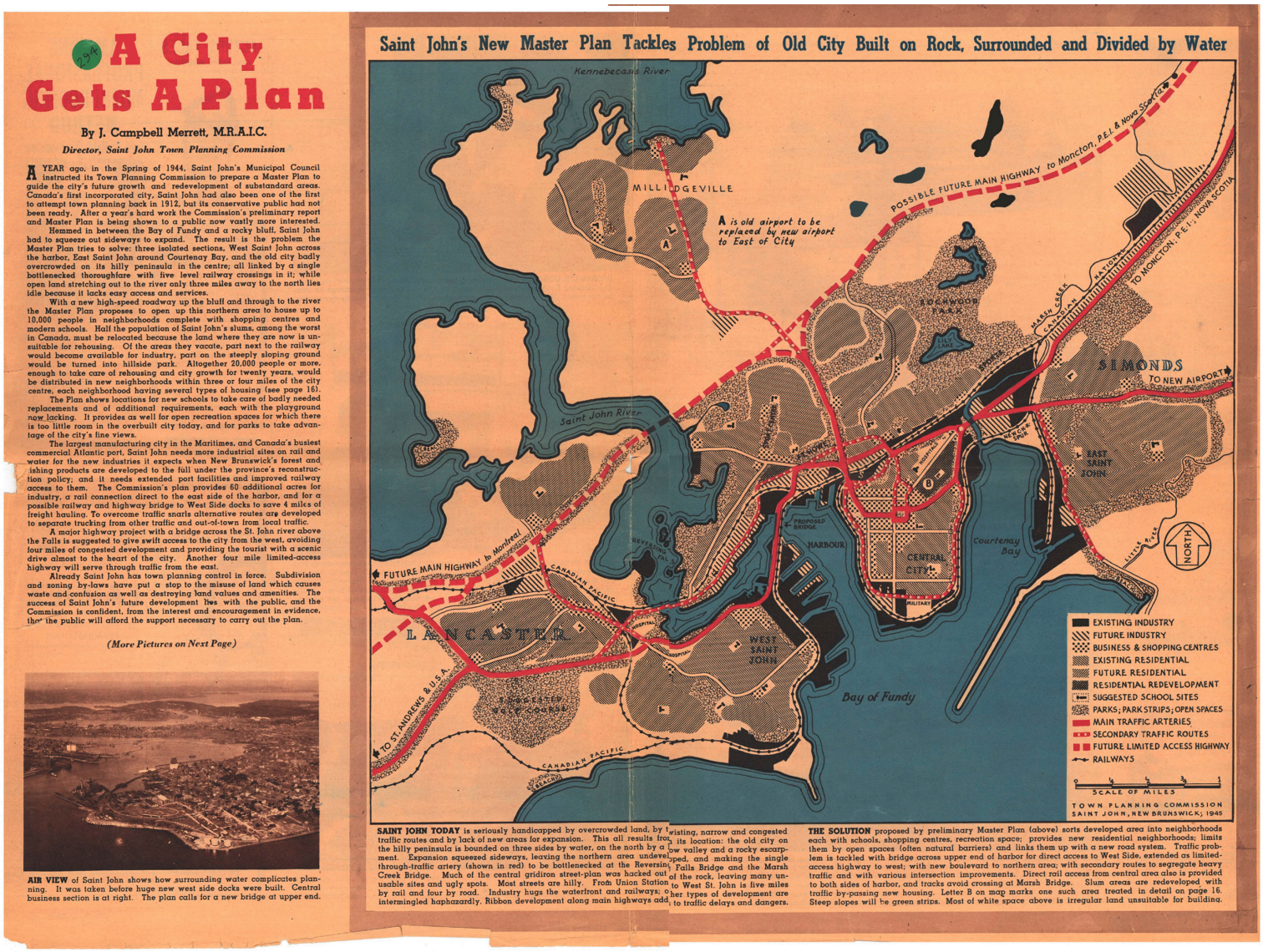


Figure 18 – Saint John Town Planning Commission. Rockwood Court Housing Development. Reproduced in the *Master Plan for the City and County of Saint John*. 1946. 38.

Figure 19 – Spartan Air Services Limited. No title. Rockwood Court visible lower centre, with road to park leading to upper centre. Monochrome air photo. Film diapositive. 1967. Cropped. Digitally reproduced from the original. Collection of the Geographic Information Systems Branch, City of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Figure 20 - Photographer unknown. *Saint John, N.B., Town Planning Commission Planning Staff: P. Goguen, J. Wallbridge, J.C.M. 1944.* Silver gelatine print with sepia toner on photographic paper. Dimensions Unknown. 1944. Digitally reproduced from the original. John Campbell Merrett Fonds, McGill University Archives, Montreal.

Figure 21 - Saint John Evening Times-Globe. “Town Planning Exhibition.” June 5, 1945. Digitally reproduced from microfilm. Collection of the Saint John Free Public Library.



A City Gets A Plan

By J. Campbell Merrett, M.R.A.I.C.

Director, Saint John Town Planning Commission

A YEAR ago, in the Spring of 1944, Saint John's Municipal Council instructed its Town Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan to guide the city's future growth and redevelopment of substandard areas. Canada's first incorporated city, Saint John had also been one of the first to attempt town planning back in 1912, but its conservative public had not been ready. After a year's hard work the Commission's preliminary report and Master Plan is being shown to a public now vastly more interested.

Hemmed in between the Bay of Fundy and a rocky bluff, Saint John had to squeeze out sideways to expand. The result is the problem the Master Plan tries to solve: three isolated sections, West Saint John across the harbor, East Saint John around Courtenay Bay, and the old city badly overcrowded on its hilly peninsula in the centre; all linked by a single bottlenecked thoroughfare with five level railway crossings in it; while open land stretching out to the river only three miles away to the north lies idle because it lacks easy access and services.

With a new high-speed roadway up the bluff and through to the river the Master Plan proposes to open up this northern area to house up to 10,000 people in neighborhoods complete with shopping centres and modern schools. Half the population of Saint John's slums, among the worst in Canada, must be relocated because the land where they are now is unsuitable for rehousing. Of the areas they vacate, part next to the railway would become available for industry, part on the steeply sloping ground would be turned into hillside park. Altogether 20,000 people or more, enough to take care of rehousing and city growth for twenty years, would be distributed in new neighborhoods within three or four miles of the city centre, each neighborhood having several types of housing (see page 16).

The Plan shows locations for new schools to take care of badly needed replacements and of additional requirements, each with the playground now lacking. It provides as well for open recreation spaces for which there is too little room in the overbuilt city today, and for parks to take advantage of the city's fine views.

The largest manufacturing city in the Maritimes, and Canada's busiest commercial Atlantic port, Saint John needs more industrial sites on rail and water for the new industries it expects when New Brunswick's forest and ishing products are developed to the full under the province's reconstruction policy; and it needs extended port facilities and improved railway access to them. The Commission's plan provides 60 additional acres for industry, a rail connection direct to the east side of the harbor, and for a possible railway and highway bridge to West Side docks to save 4 miles of freight hauling. To overcome traffic snarls alternative routes are developed to separate trucking from other traffic and out-of-town from local traffic.

A major highway project with a bridge across the St. John river above the Falls is suggested to give swift access to the city from the west, avoiding four miles of congested development and providing the tourist with a scenic drive almost to the heart of the city. Another four mile limited-access highway will serve through traffic from the east.

Already Saint John has town planning control in force. Subdivision and zoning by-laws have put a stop to the misuse of land which causes waste and confusion as well as destroying land values and amenities. The success of Saint John's future development lies with the public, and the Commission is confident, from the interest and encouragement in evidence, that the public will afford the support necessary to carry out the plan.

(More Pictures on Next Page)

AIR VIEW of Saint John shows how surrounding water complicates planning. It was taken before huge new west side docks were built. Central business section is at right. The plan calls for a new bridge at upper end.

Saint John's New Master Plan Tackles Problem of Old City Built on Rock, Surrounded and Divided by Water

Kennebecasis River
MILLIDGEVILLE
A is old airport to be replaced by new airport to East of City
POSSIBLE FUTURE MAIN HIGHWAY to Moncton, P.E.I. & Nova Scotia
TO MONCTON, P.E.I., NOVA SCOTIA
ROCKWOOD PARK
MARSH CREEK
CANADIAN NATIONAL
SIMONDS
TO NEW AIRPORT
Saint John River
EAST SAINT JOHN
PROPOSED BRIDGE
HARBOUR
CENTRAL CITY
Courtenay Bay
NORTH
FUTURE MAIN HIGHWAY to Montreal
CANADIAN PACIFIC
LANCASTER
WEST SAINT JOHN
Bay of Fundy
TO ST. ANDREWS & U.S.A.
SUGGESTED GOLF COURSE
CANADIAN PACIFIC

EXISTING INDUSTRY
FUTURE INDUSTRY
BUSINESS & SHOPPING CENTRES
EXISTING RESIDENTIAL
FUTURE RESIDENTIAL
RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT
SUGGESTED SCHOOL SITES
PARKS; PARK STRIPS; OPEN SPACES
MAIN TRAFFIC ARTERIES
SECONDARY TRAFFIC ROUTES
FUTURE LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAY
RAILWAYS
SCALE OF MILES
TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, 1945

SAINT JOHN TODAY is seriously handicapped by overcrowded land, by traffic routes and by lack of new areas for expansion. This all results from the hilly peninsula is bounded on three sides by water, on the north by a ment. Expansion squeezed sideways, leaving the northern area undeveloped through-traffic artery (shown in red) to be bottlenecked at the Reversing Creek Bridge. Much of the central gridiron street-plan was hacked out usable sites and ugly spots. Most streets are hilly. From Union Station by rail and four by road. Industry hugs the waterfront and railways; o intermingled haphazardly. Ribbon development along main highways add

isting, narrow and congested its location: the old city on ow valley and a rocky escarpped, and making the single Falls Bridge and the Marsh of the rock, leaving many unto West St. John is five miles ber types of development are to traffic delays and dangers.

THE SOLUTION proposed by preliminary Master Plan (above) sorts developed area into neighborhoods each with schools, shopping centres, recreation space; provides new residential neighborhoods; limits them by open spaces (often natural barriers) and links them up with a new road system. Traffic problem is tackled with bridge across upper end of harbor for direct access to West Side, extended as limited-access highway to west; with new boulevard to northern area; with secondary routes to segregate heavy traffic and with various intersection improvements. Direct rail access from central area also is provided to both sides of harbor, and tracks avoid crossing at Marsh Bridge. Slum areas are redeveloped with traffic by-passing new housing. Letter B on map marks one such area treated in detail on page 16. Steep slopes will be green strips. Most of white space above is irregular land unsuitable for building.

Figure 22 - Portions of *The Standard*, June 2, 1945. Newsprint and ink. Approximately 17 by 10 Inches. Digitally reproduced from the original. Collection of the Author.

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